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SERMONS,

LEFT FOR PUBLICATION

BY

JOHN TAYLOR, LL.D.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMONS

ON

DIFFERENT SUBJECTS,

LEFT FOR PUBLICATION

BY

JOHN TAYLOR, LL.D.

LATE PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER,
RECTOR OF BOSWORTH, LEICESTERSHIRE,
AND MINISTER OF ST. MARGARET'S,
WESTMINSTER.

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WRITTEN BY
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.
FOR THE FUNERAL OF HIS WIFE.

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Jeſus ſaid unto her, I am the Reſurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live;

And whoſoever liveth, and believeth in me, ſhall never die. p. 221.

SER-

SERMON I.

ISAIAH, xxvi. 3.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee, becauſe he truſteth in thee.

IN order to the explication of this text, or the enforcement of the precept implied in it, there ſeems to be no neceſſity, either of proving, that all men are deſirous of happineſs, or that their deſire, for the moſt part, fails of being gratified. Every man is conſcious, that he neither performs, nor forbears any thing upon any other motive than the proſpect, either of an immediate gratification, or a diſtant reward; that whether he com-

plies with temptation, or repels it, he is ſtill influenced by the ſame general regard to his own felicity; but that when he yields to the ſolicitation of his appetite, or the impulſe of his paſſions, he is overborne by the prevalence of the object before him; and when he adheres to his duty, in oppoſition to his preſent intereſt, he is influenced by the hopes of future happineſs.

That almoſt every man is diſappointed in his ſearch after happineſs, is apparent from the clamorous complaints which are always to be heard; from the reſtleſs diſcontent, which is hourly to be obſerved, and from the inceſſant purſuit of new objects, which employ almoſt every moment of every man's life. For a deſire of change is a ſufficient proof, that we are diſſatisfied with our preſent ſtate; and evidently ſhews, that we feel ſome pain which we deſire to avoid, or miſs ſome enjoyment which we wiſh to poſſeſs.

The true cauſe of this general diſguſt, an unprejudiced and attentive ſurvey of the world will

will not long fail of diſcovering. It will eaſily appear, that men fail to gain what they ſo much deſire, becauſe they ſeek it where it is not to be found, becauſe they ſuffer themſelves to be dazzled by ſpecious appearances, reſign themſelves up to the direction of their paſſions, and, when one purſuit has failed of affording them that ſatisfaction which they expected from it, apply themſelves with the ſame ardour to another equally unprofitable, and waſte their lives in ſucceſſive deluſions, in idle ſchemes of imaginary enjoyment; in the chace of ſhadows which fleet before them, and in attempts to graſp a bubble, which, however it may attract the eye by the brightneſs of its colour, is neither ſolid nor laſting, but owes its beauty only to its diſtance, and is no ſooner touched than it diſappears.

As men differ in age or diſpoſition, they are expoſed to different deluſions in this important enquiry. The young and the gay imagine happineſs to conſiſt in ſhew, in merriment and noiſe, or in a conſtant ſucceſſion of amuſements, or in the gratification

of their appetites, and the frequent repetition of ſenſual pleaſures. Inſtead of founding happineſs on the ſolid baſis of reaſon and reflection, they raiſe an airy fabrick of momentary ſatisfaction, which is perpetually decaying, and perpetually to be repaired. They pleaſe themſelves, not with thinking juſtly, but with avoiding to think at all, with a ſuſpence of all the operations of their intellectual faculties, which defends them from remembrance of the paſt, or anticipation of the future. They lull themſelves in an enervate, and cowardly diſſipation, and, inſtead of being happy, are only indolent.

. That this ſtate is not a ſtate of happineſs, that it affords no real ſatisfaction to a reaſonable mind, thoſe who appear moſt engaged in it will, in their calmeſt moments, readily confeſs. Thoſe among them, on whom Providence has beſtowed ſuch abilities as are neceſſary to the diſcovery of truth, and the diſtinction of appearance from reality (for, among the negligent and voluptuous, men of this character are ſometimes to be found), have

have always owned, that their felicity is like that of a deep ſleep, from which they wake to care and ſorrow; or of a pleaſing dream, that affords them ſhort gratifications, of which the day deprives them; and that their pleaſures only differ from the phantoms of the night in this, that they leave behind them the pangs of guilt, with the vexation of diſappointment.

It may be imagined, that reaſonable beings muſt quickly diſcover how little ſuch ſatisfactions are adapted to their nature, and how neceſſary it is to change their meaſures, in order to the attainment of that happineſs which they deſire; and in effect, it is generally found that few, except the young and unexperienced, content themſelves with ſenſual gratifications, and that men, as they advance in years, and improve their judgement by obſervation, always confeſs, by the alteration of their conduct, that mere voluptuouſneſs is not ſufficient to fill the deſires of the human mind.

They therefore ſhake off the lethargy of ſloth, forſake diverſion and amuſements, and engage in the purſuit of riches or of honours. They employ thoſe hours, which were frequently ſuffered to paſs away unnumbered and unheeded, with the moſt ſolicitous application, and the moſt vigilant attention. They are no longer negligent of all that paſſes about them, no more careleſs of the opinions of mankind, or unconcerned with regard to cenſure or applauſe. They become anxious leſt any opportunity ſhould be loſt of improving their fortunes, and leſt they ſhould give any occaſion to reports which may injure their reputation, and obſtruct their advancement. They conſtrain their words, their actions, and their looks, to obtain popularity, becauſe they conſider popularity as neceſſary to grandeur, and grandeur as the foundation of happineſs.

But a very ſhort experience teaches, what might indeed have been without the trial diſcovered by reflection, that perfect peace, that

that peace which is ſo much deſired, is not to be found in wealth and greatneſs. He that ſucceeds in his firſt attempts is animated to new deſigns; new deſigns produce new anxieties and new oppoſition; and though the ſecond attempt ſhould be equally happy, it will be found, as ſoon as the tranſports of novelty have ceaſed, as ſoon as cuſtom has made elevation familiar, that peace is yet to be ſought, and that new meaſures muſt be taken for the attainment of that tranquillity, for which it is the nature of man to languiſh, and the want of which is ill ſupplied by hurry and confuſion, by pomp and variety.

The ſame diſpoſition which inclines any man to raiſe himſelf to a ſuperiority over others, will naturally excite the ſame deſires of greater elevation while he ſees any ſuperior to himſelf. There is therefore no hope that, by purſuing greatneſs, any man can be happy, or, at leaſt, this happineſs muſt be confined to one, becauſe only one can be without a ſuperior; and that one muſt ſurely feel his enjoyments very frequently diſturbed,

when he remembers by how many the ſtation which he poſſeſſes is envied and coveted; when he reflects, how eaſily his poſſeſſions may be taken from him, perhaps by the ſame arts by which he attained them; how quickly the affections of the people may, by artful repreſentations of his conduct, be alienated from him; or how eaſily he may be deſtroyed by violence, and what numbers ambition or revenge may invite to deſtroy him.

There is at leaſt one conſideration, which muſt imbitter the life of him, who places his happineſs in his preſent ſtate; a conſideration that cannot be ſuppreſſed by any artful ſophiſtries, which the appetites or the ſenſes are always ready to ſuggeſt, and which it might be imagined not always poſſible to avoid in the moſt rapid whirl of pleaſure, or the moſt inceſſant tumults of employment. As it is impoſſible for any man not to know, it may be well imagined difficult for him not to remember, that however ſurrounded by his dependents, however careſſed by his patrons, however applauded by his flatterers, or

eſteemed by his friends, he muſt one day die; that though he ſhould have reaſon to imagine himſelf ſecured from any ſudden diminution of his wealth, or any violent precipitation from his rank or power, yet they muſt ſoon be taken away by a force, not to be reſiſted or eſcaped. He cannot but ſometimes think, when he ſurveys his acquiſitions, or counts his followers, *that this night his ſoul may be required of him*, and that he had applauded himſelf for the attainment of that which he cannot hope to keep long, and which, if it could make him happy while he enjoys it, is yet of very little value, becauſe the enjoyment muſt be very ſhort.

The ſtory of the great Eaſtern Monarch, who, when he ſurveyed his innumerable army from an eminence, wept at the reflection, that in leſs than a hundred years not one of all that multitude would remain, has been often mentioned; becauſe the particular circumſtances, in which that remark occurred, naturally claim the thought, and ſtrike the imagination; but every man that places his

happineſs

happineſs in external objects, may every day, with equal propriety, make the ſame obſervations. Though he does not lead armies, or govern kingdoms, he may reflect, whenever he finds his heart ſwelling with any preſent advantage, that he muſt in a very ſhort time loſe what he ſo much eſteems, that in a year, a month, a day, or an hour, he may be ſtruck out from the book of life, and placed in a ſtate, where wealth or honour ſhall have no reſidence, and where all thoſe diſtinctions ſhall be for ever obliterated, which now engroſs his thoughts, and exalt his pride.

This reflection will ſurely be ſufficient to hinder that peace, which all terreſtrial enjoyments can afford, from being perfect. It ſurely will ſoon diſperſe thoſe meteors of happineſs that glitter in the eyes only of the thoughtleſs and the ſupine, and awaken him to a ſerious and rational enquiry, where real happineſs is to be found ;- by what means man, whom the great Creatour cannot be ſuppoſed to have formed without the power of

obtaining

obtaining happineſs, may ſet himſelf from the ſhackles of anxiety with which he is incumbered; may throw off the load of terrour which oppreſſes him, and liberate himſelf from thoſe horrours which the approach of death perpetually excites.

This he will immediately find only to be accompliſhed by ſecuring to himſelf the protection of a Being mighty to ſave; a Being whoſe aſſiſtance may be extended equally to all parts of his duration, who can equally defend him in the time of danger, and of ſecurity; in the tumults of the day, and the privacy of the night; in the time of tribulation, and in a time frequently more fatal, the time of wealth; and in the hour of death, and in the day of judgement. And when he has found the neceſſity of this ſovereign Protector, and humbled himſelf with a due conviction of his own impotence, he may at laſt find the only comfort which this life can afford him, by remembering, that this great, this unbounded Being, has informed us of the terms on which perfect

peace

peace is to be obtained, and has promiſed it to thoſe whoſe mind is ſtayed on him.

Since therefore the purſuit of perfect peace is the great, the neceſſary, the inevitable, buſineſs of human life; ſince this peace is to be attained by truſt in God, and by that only; ſince, without this, every ſtate is miſerable, and the voluptuous and the buſy are equally diſappointed; what can be more uſeful, than ſeriouſly to enquire, Firſt, what is meant by this truſt in God, to which perfect peace is promiſed? and,

Secondly, By what means this truſt in God is to be attained?

Firſt, therefore, let us examine what is meant by this truſt in God, to which perfect peace is promiſed.

Truſt, when it is uſed on common occaſions, implies a kind of reſignation to the honeſty, or abilities of another. Thus we truſt a phyſician, when we obey his directions

tions without knowing, or aſking, the particular reaſons for the methods which he enjoins. Thus we truſt a friend, when we commit our affairs to his management, without diſturbing ourſelves with any care concerning them. Thus we truſt a patron, when we ſerve him with diligence, without any other certainty of a reward than what our confidence in his generoſity affords us. Theſe inſtances may give us ſome idea of that truſt which we ought to repoſe in God, but an idea, in the utmoſt degree, groſs and inadequate. Our truſt in God ought to differ from every other truſt, as infinity differs from an atom. It ought to tranſcend every other degree of confidence, as its object is exalted above every degree of created excellence.

But, in our preſent ſtate, it is impoſſible to practiſe this, or any other duty, in perfection. We cannot truſt God as we ought, becauſe we cannot know him as we ought. We know, however, that he is infinite in wiſdom, in power, and in goodneſs; that there-

therefore he deſigns the happineſs of all his creatures, that he cannot but know the proper means by which this end may be obtained, and that in the uſe of theſe means, as he cannot be miſtaken, becauſe he is omniſcient, ſo he cannot be defeated, becauſe he is almighty.

We know, therefore, that thoſe whom he ſhall protect cannot be in danger; that neither the malice of wicked men, nor of wicked angels, can really injure them, but that perſecution and danger ſhall only harraſs them for a time, and death ſet them free from diſappointment and from pain. He therefore that truſts in God will no longer be diſtracted in his ſearch after happineſs, for he will find it in a firm belief, that whatever evils are ſuffered to befal him will finally contribute to his felicity; and that by *ſtaying his mind upon the Lord, he will be kept in peace.*

But God has promiſed this protection, not indiſcriminately to all, but to thoſe only who endea-

endeavour to obtain it, by complying with the conditions which he has preſcribed; nor is the perfect peace, which the confidence of divine ſupport confers, to be hoped for but by thoſe who have obtained a well-grounded truſt in him; and, by the practice of his precepts, have ſtayed their minds upon him. It is therefore neceſſary to enquire,

Secondly, how this truſt is to be attained?

That there is a fallacious and precipitate truſt in God, a truſt which, as it is not founded upon God's promiſes, will in the end be diſappointed, we are informed by our Saviour himſelf. "Many will ſay unto me, "in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not pro- "pheſied in thy name? and in thy name "caſt out devils? and in thy name have done "many wonderful works? and then I will "profeſs unto them, I never knew you. De- "part from me, ye that work iniquity."

Thoſe who contented themſelves with believing, and profeſſing Chriſtianity, without obeying

obeying its precepts; thoſe who while they call the great Authour of our faith the Lord, their Maſter, and their God, and yet neglect his precepts and work iniquity, will be rejected by him at the laſt day, as thoſe whom he has never known; thoſe to whom his regard never was extended, and, notwithſtanding the confidence with which they may claim his interceſſion, will not be diſtinguiſhed by any favour from other ſinners.

Truſt in God, that truſt to which perfect peace is promiſed, is to be obtained only by repentance, obedience, and ſupplication, not by nouriſhing in our own hearts a confuſed idea of the goodneſs of God, or a firm perſuaſion that we are in a ſtate of grace; by which ſome have been deceived, as it may be feared, to their own deſtruction. We are not to imagine ourſelves ſafe, only becauſe we are not harraſſed with thoſe anxieties about our future ſtate with which others are tormented, but which are ſo far from being proofs of reprobation, that though they are often miſtaken by thoſe that languiſh under them,

them, they are more frequently evidences of piety, and a ſincere and fervent deſire of pleaſing God. We are not to imagine, that God approves us becauſe he does not afflict us, nor, on the other hand, to perſuade ourſelves too haſtily that he afflicts us, becauſe he loves us. We are, without expecting any extraordinary effuſions of light, to examine our actions by the great and unchangeable rules of Revelation and Reaſon, *to do to others as we would that they ſhould do to us*, and to love God with all our heart, and expreſs that love by keeping his commandments.

He that hopes to find peace by truſting God, muſt obey him; and when he has at any time failed in his obedience, which amongſt the beſt men will be very frequent, he muſt endeavour to reconcile God to him by repentance. He may then find another occaſion of exerciſing his truſt, by aſſuring himſelf, that *when the wicked forſakes his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and returns unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon.*

This conſtant and devout practice is both the effect, and cauſe, of confidence in God. He will naturally pour out his ſupplications to the Supreme Being, who truſts in him, for aſſiſtance and protection; and he, who, with proper fervour and humility, proſtrates himſelf before God, will always riſe with an increaſe of holy confidence. By meditating on his own weakneſs, he will hourly receive new conviction of the neceſſity of ſoliciting the favour of his Creatour; and by recollecting his promiſes, will confirm himſelf in the hope of obtaining what he deſires, and if, to ſecure theſe promiſes, he ſteadily practiſes the duties on which they depend, he will ſoon find his mind ſtayed on God, and be kept in perfect peace, becauſe he truſteth in him.

SERMON

SERMON II.

JOB, xiv. 1.

Man that is born of a Woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.

THE poſition, contained in this ſentence, neither requires, nor admits, proof or illuſtration; being too evident to be denied, and too clear to be miſtaken. That life is of ſhort continuance, and is diſquieted by many moleſtations, every man knows, and every man feels; and the complaint, attributed to Job, in the hiſtory that is ſuppoſed to be the oldeſt book, of which mankind is in poſſeſſion, has been continued, and will be continued, through all human generations with endleſs repetitions.

But truth does not always operate in proportion to its reception. What has been always known, and very often ſaid, as it impreſſes the mind with no new images, excites no attention, and is ſuffered to lie unheeded in the memory. Truth, poſſeſt without the labour of inveſtigation, like many of the general conveniences of life, loſes its eſtimation by its eaſineſs of acceſs; nor is it always ſufficiently remembered, that the moſt valuable things are thoſe which are moſt plentifully beſtowed.

To conſider the ſhortneſs, or miſery, of life, is not an employment to which the mind recurs for ſolace or diverſion; or to which it is invited by any hope of immediate delight. It is one of thoſe intellectual medicines, of which the nauſeous eſſence often obſtructs the benefit, and which the faſtidiouſneſs of nature prompts us to refuſe. But we are told by Solomon, that there is *a time not only to laugh*, but *a time to weep*; and that it is good ſometimes *to enter into the houſe*

of

of mourning. Many things which are not pleaſant may be ſalutary; and among them is the juſt eſtimate of human life, which may be made by all with advantage, though by few, very few, with delight. As it is the buſineſs of a traveller to view the way before him, whatever dangers may threaten, or difficulties obſtruct him, and however void may be the proſpect of elegance or pleaſure; it is our duty, in the pilgrimage of life, to proceed with our eyes open, and to ſee our ſtate; not as hope or fancy may dileneate it, but as it has been in reality appointed by Divine Providence. From errours, to which, after moſt diligent examination, the frailty of our underſtandings may ſometimes expoſe us, we may reaſonably hope, that he, who knows whereof we are made, will ſuffer no irremediable evil to follow; but it would be unreaſonable to expect, that the ſame indulgence ſhall be extended to voluntary ignorance; or, that we ſhall not ſuffer by thoſe deluſions to which we reſign ourſelves by idleneſs or choice.

Nothing but daily experience could make it credible, that we ſhould ſee the daily deſcent into the grave of thoſe whom we love or fear, admire or deteſt; that we ſhould ſee one generation paſt, and another paſſing, ſee poſſeſſions daily changing their owners, and the world, at very ſhort intervals, altering its appearance, and yet ſhould want to be reminded that life is ſhort; or that we ſhould, wherever we turn our eyes, find misfortune and diſtreſs, and have our ears daily filled with the lamentations of miſery; that we ſhould often feel pain and ſickneſs, diſappointments and privations, and yet, at every reſpiration of momentary eaſe, or gleam of fugitive and uncertain joy, be elated beyond the true ſenſe of our condition, and need the voice of ſalutary admonition, to make us remember that life is miſerable.

But ſince the mind is always of itſelf ſhrinking from diſagreeable images, it is ſometimes neceſſary to recal them; and it may contribute to the repreſſion of many un-

unreaſonable deſires, and the prevention of many faults and follies, if we frequently, and attentively conſider,

Firſt, *That man born of a woman is of few days.* And,

Secondly, *That man born of a woman is full of trouble.*

As this changeable and uncertain life is only the paſſage to an immutable ſtate, and endleſs duration of happineſs or miſery; it ought never to be abſent from our thoughts, That *man born of a woman is of few days.*

The buſineſs of life is to work out our ſalvation; and the days are few in which proviſion muſt be made for eternity. We all ſtand upon the brink of the grave; of that ſtate, in which there is no repentance. He, whoſe life is extended to its utmoſt natural boundaries, can live but a little while; and that he ſhall be one of thoſe, who are comparatively ſaid to live long, no man can tell.

Our days are not only few, but uncertain. The utmoſt that can be hoped, is little; and of that little, the greater part is denied to the majority of mankind.

Our time is ſhort, and our work is great; it is therefore, with the kindeſt earneſtneſs, enjoined by the Apoſtle, that we uſe all diligence to make our 'calling and election ſure.' But to an impartial ſurveyor of the ways of men, will it appear that the Apoſtle's ſummons has been heard or regarded? Let the moſt candid and charitable obſerver take cognizance of the general practice of the world; and what can be diſcovered but gay thoughtleſſneſs, or ſordid induſtry? It ſeems that to ſecure their calling and election is the care of few. Of the greater part it may be ſaid, that God is not in their thoughts. One forgets him in his buſineſs, another in his amuſements; one in eager enjoyment of to-day, another in ſolicitous contrivance for to-morrow. Some die amidſt the gratifications of luxury, and ſome in the tumults of conteſts undecided, and purpoſes uncompleated.

Warn-

Warnings are multiplied, but without notice. *Wiſdom crieth in the ſtreets*, but is rarely heard.

Among thoſe that live thus wholly occupied by preſent things, there are ſome, in whom all ſenſe of religion ſeems extinct or dormant; who acquieſce in their own modes of life, and never look forward into futurity, but gratify themſelves within their own accuſtomed circle of amuſements, or limit their thoughts by the attainment of their preſent purſuit; and, without ſuffering themſelves to be interrupted by the unwelcome thoughts of death and judgement, congratulate themſelves on their prudence or felicity, and reſt ſatisfied with what the world can afford them; not that they doubt, but forget, a future ſtate; not that they diſbelieve their own immortality, but that they never conſider it.

To theſe men it is ſurely proper to repreſent the ſhortneſs of life, and to remind them that human acquiſitions and enjoyments are of few days; and that, whatever

value may be aſſigned them by perverted opinions, they certainly want durability; that the fabric of terreſtrial happineſs has no foundation that can long ſupport it; that every hour, however enlivened by gaiety, or dignified by ſplendour, is a part ſubducted from the ſum of life; that age advances alike upon the negligent and anxious; and that every moment of delight makes delight the ſhorter.

If reaſon forbids us to fix our hearts upon things which we are not certain of retaining, we violate a prohibition ſtill ſtronger, when we ſuffer ourſelves to place our happineſs in that which muſt certainly be loſt; yet ſuch is all that this world affords us. Pleaſures and honours muſt quickly periſh, becauſe life itſelf muſt ſoon be at an end.

But if it be folly to delight in advantages of uncertain tenure and ſhort continuance, how great is the folly of preferring them to permanent and perpetual good! The man whoſe whole attention converges to this world,

world, even if we ſuppoſe all his attempts proſperous, and all his wiſhes granted, gains only empty pleaſure, which he cannot keep, at the coſt of eternal happineſs, which, if now neglected, he can never gain.

Let ſuch men therefore ſeriouſly reflect, that *man born of a woman is of few days, that he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth not.*

Others there are on whom the intereſts of life have very ſtrong hold, who relax their thoughts by pleaſure, or enchain them by attention to wealth or power; and yet feel, with forcible conviction, the importance of futurity; in whoſe breaſts pious intentions are often budding, though they are quickly nipped by ſecular deſires. Such men ſuffer frequent diſturbance from the remonſtrances of reaſon, and the reproaches of conſcience, and do not ſet reaſon, or conſcience, at defiance, but endeavour to pacify them with aſſuaſive promiſes of repentance and amendment. They know that their preſent ſtate

is

is dangerous, and therefore withdraw from it to a fancied futurity, in which whatever is crooked is to be made ſtraight; in which temptations are to be rejected, and paſſions to be conquered; in which wiſdom and piety are to regulate the day; in which every hour ſhall have its proper duty. The morning ſhall awake beneficence, and the evening ſtill the ſoul in gratitude and devotion.

Purpoſes like theſe are often formed, and often forgotten. When remorſe and ſolitude preſs hard upon the mind, they afford a temporary refuge, which, like other ſhelters from a ſtorm, is forſaken, when the calm returns. The deſign of amendment is never diſmiſſed, but it reſts in the boſom without effect. The time convenient for ſo great a change of conduct is not yet come. There are hindrances which another year will remove; there are helps which ſome near event will ſupply. Day riſes after day, and one year follows another, and produces nothing, but reſolutions without effect, and ſelf-reproach without reformation. The time

deſtined

deſtined for a new life lapſes in ſilence; another time is fixed, and another lapſes; but the ſame train of deluſion ſtill continues. He that ſees his danger, doubts not his power of eſcaping it; and though he has deceived himſelf a thouſand times, loſes little of his own confidence. The indignation excited by the paſt will, he thinks, ſecure him from any future failure. He retires to confirm his thoughts by meditation, and feels ſentiments of piety powerful within him. He ventures again into the ſtream of life, and finds himſelf again carried away by the current.

That to ſuch men, the ſenſe of their danger may not be uſeleſs; that they may no longer trifle with their own conviction; it is neceſſary to remind them, that *man is of few days*; that the life allotted to human beings is ſhort, and, while they ſtand ſtill in idle ſuſpence, is growing always ſhorter; that as this little time is ſpent well or ill, their whole future exiſtence will be happy, or miſerable; that he who begins the great work of his ſalvation early, has employment

adequate

adequate to all his powers; and that he who has delayed it, can hope to accompliſh it only by delaying it no longer.

To him who turns his thoughts late to the duties of Religion, the time is not only ſhorter, but the work is greater. The more ſin has prevailed, with the more difficulty is its dominion reſiſted. Habits are formed by repeated acts, and therefore old habits are always ſtrongeſt. The mode of life, to which we have been accuſtomed, and which has entwined itſelf with all our thoughts and actions, is not quitted but with much difficulty. The want of thoſe vanities, which have hitherto filled the day, is not eaſily ſupplied. Accuſtomed pleaſures ruſh upon the imagination; the paſſions clamour for their uſual gratifications; and ſin, though reſolutely ſhaken off, will ſtruggle to regain its former hold.

To overcome all theſe difficulties, and overcome they muſt be, who can tell what time will be ſufficient! To diſburden the conſcience,

ſcience, to reclaim the deſires, to combat ſenſuality, and repreſs vanity, is not the work of an hour, or of a day. Many conflicts muſt be endured, many falls recovered, and many temptations repelled. The arts of the enemy muſt be counteracted, and the deceitfulneſs of our own hearts detected, by ſteady and perſevering vigilance.

But how much more dreadful does the danger of delay appear, when it is conſidered, that not only life is every day ſhorter, and the work of reformation every day greater, but that ſtrength is every day leſs! It is not only comparatively leſſened by the long continuance of bad habits, but, if the greater part of our time be paſt, it is abſolutely leſs by natural decay. In the feebleneſs of declining life, reſolution is apt to languiſh; and the pains, the ſickneſs, and conſequent infirmities of age, too frequently demand ſo much care for the body, that very little care is, or can be, taken for the ſoul.

One conſideration more ought to be deeply impreſſed upon every ſluggiſh and dilatory lingerer. The penitential ſenſe of ſin, and the deſire of a new life, when they ariſe in the mind, are to be received as monitions excited by our merciful Father, as calls which it is our duty to hear, and our intereſt to follow; that to turn our thoughts away from them, is a new ſin; a ſin which, often repeated, may at laſt be puniſhed by dereliction. He that has been called often in vain, may be called no more; and when death comes upon him, he will recollect his broken reſolves with unutterable anguiſh; will wiſh for time to do what he has hitherto neglected, and lament in vain that his days are few.

The motives to religious vigilance, and diligence in our duties, which are afforded by ſerious meditation on the ſhortneſs of life, will receive aſſiſtance from the view of its miſery; and we are therefore to remember,

Secondly,

Secondly, That *man born of a woman is full of trouble.*

The immediate effect of the numerous calamities, with which human nature is threatened, or afflicted, is to direct our deſires to a better ſtate. When we know, that we are on every ſide beſet with dangers; that our condition admits many evils which cannot be remedied, but contains no good which cannot be taken from us; that pain lies in ambuſh behind pleaſure, and misfortune behind ſucceſs; that we have bodies ſubject to innumerable maladies, and minds liable to endleſs perturbations; that our knowledge often gives us pain, by preſenting to our wiſhes ſuch felicity as is beyond our reach, and our ignorance is ſuch, that we often purſue, with eargerneſs, what either we cannot attain, or what, if we could attain it, diſappoints our hopes; that in the dead calm of ſolitude we are inſufficient to our own contentment, and that when wearineſs of ourſelves impels us to ſociety, we are often ill

 received;

received; when we perceive that ſmall offences may raiſe enemies, but that great benefits will not always gain us friends; when we find ourſelves courted by intereſt, and forſaken by ingratitude; when thoſe who love us fall daily into the grave, and we ſee ourſelves conſidered as aliens and ſtrangers by the riſing generation; it ſeems that we muſt by neceſſity turn our thoughts to another life, where, to thoſe who are well prepared for their departure, there will no longer be pain or ſorrow.

Of the troubles incident to mankind, every one is beſt acquainted with his own ſhare. The miſeries of others may attract, but his own force, his attention; and as man is not afflicted but for good purpoſes, that attention, if well regulated, will contribute to purify his heart.

We are taught in the hiſtory of Adam's fall, that trouble was the conſequence of ſin, and that miſery came into the world by diſobedience to the divine law. Sin and vexation

tion are ſtill ſo cloſely united, that he who traces his troubles to their ſource will commonly find that his faults have produced them; and he is then to conſider his ſufferings as the mild admonitions of his heavenly Father, by which he is ſummoned to timely penitence. He is ſo far from having any reaſon to repine, that he may draw comfortable hopes of pardon and acceptance, and may ſay, with the higheſt reaſon, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*

It is, however, poſſible that trouble may, ſometime, be the conſequence of virtue. In times of perſecution this has often happened. Confeſſors of the truth have been puniſhed by exile, impriſonment, tortures, and death. The faithful have been driven from place to place, and thoſe *have wandered about in ſheep-ſkins and goat-ſkins, of whom the world was not worthy.* Heb. xi. v. 37.

Of ſuch violence Providence has now removed us from the danger; but it is ſtill poſſible, that integrity may raiſe enemies,

and that a reſolute adherence to the right may not always be without danger. But evils of this kind bring their conſolation with them; and their natural effect is to raiſe the eye and thoughts to him who certainly judges right; and to excite ardent deſires of that ſtate, where innocence and happineſs ſhall always be united.

When we have leiſure from our own cares to caſt our eyes about us, and behold the whole creation groaning in miſery, we muſt be careful that our judgement is not preſumptuous, and that our charity is not regulated by external appearances. We are not to conſider thoſe on whom evil falls, as the outcaſts of Providence; for though temporal proſperity was promiſed to the Jews, as a reward of faithful adherence to the worſhip of God; yet under the diſpenſation of the Goſpel we are no where taught, that the good ſhall have any exemption from the common accidents of life, or that natural and civil evil ſhall not be equally ſhared by the righteous and the wicked.

The frequency of misfortunes, and universality of misery, may properly repress any tendency to discontent or murmur. We suffer only what is suffered by others, and often by those who are better than ourselves.

But the chief reason why we should send out our enquiries, to collect intelligence of misery, is, that we may find opportunities of doing good. Many human troubles are such as God has given man the power of alleviating. The wants of poverty may evidently be removed by the kindness of those who have more than their own use requires. Of such beneficence the time in which we live does not want examples; and surely that duty can never be neglected, to which so great rewards are so explicitly promised.

But the power of doing good is not confined to the wealthy. He that has nothing else to give, may often give advice. Wisdom likewise has benefits in its power. A wise

man may reclaim the vicious, and inſtruct the ignorant, may quiet the throbs of ſorrow, or diſentangle the perplexities of conſcience. He may compoſe the reſentful, encourage the timorous, and animate the hopeleſs. In the multifarious afflictions, with which every ſtate of human life is acquainted, there is place for a thouſand offices of tenderneſs; ſo that he, whoſe deſire it is to do good, can never be long without an opportunity; and every opportunity that Providence preſents, let us ſeize with eagerneſs, and improve with diligence; remembering that we have no time to loſe, for *Man that is born of a Woman is of few days.*

SER-

SERMON III.

JOB 1. 22.

In all this Job ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly.

SUCH is the weakneſs of human nature, that every particular ſtate, or condition, lies open to particular temptations. Different frames of conſtitution expoſe us to different paſſions, of equal danger to our virtue; and different methods of life, whether we engage in them by choice, or are forced upon them by neceſſity, have each of them their inlets to ſin, and their avenues to perdition.

The two oppoſite ſtates of proſperity and adverſity equally require our vigilance and caution; each of them is a ſtate of conflict, in which nothing but unwearied reſiſtance can preſerve us from being overcome.

The vices of proſperity are well known, and generally obſerved. The haughtineſs of high rank, the luxury of affluence, and the cruelty of power, every man remarks, and no man palliates. So that they are the common ſubjects of invective.

But though compaſſion hinders men from being equally ſevere upon the faults of the unhappy and diſtreſſed, yet, as there always has been, and always will be, at leaſt an equal number in this, as in the other ſtate, it is proper that they likewiſe ſhould be warned of the crimes to which the circumſtances of their condition expoſe them, and furniſhed with ſuch reflections as may enable them to avoid them; that one miſery may not produce a greater, nor misfortune be the cauſe of wickedneſs.

There

There is no crime more incident to thoſe whoſe life is embittered with calamities, and whom afflictions have reduced to gloomineſs and melancholy, than that of repining at the determinations of Providence, or of *charging God fooliſhly*. They are often tempted to unſeemly enquiries into the reaſon of his diſpenſations, and to expoſtulations about the juſtice of that ſentence which condemns them to their preſent ſufferings. They conſider the lives of thoſe whom they account happier than themſelves, with an eye of malice and ſuſpicion, and if they find them no better than their own, think themſelves almoſt juſtified in murmuring at their own ſtate.

But how widely they err from their duty, by giving way to diſcontent, and allowing themſelves to diſpute the reaſonableneſs of thoſe laws by which the great Creator governs the world, will appear,

Firſt, by conſidering the attributes of God. And

Secondly, by reflecting on the ignorance of man.

Firſt,

First, by conſidering the attributes of God.

Many of the errours of mankind, both in opinion and practice, ſeem to ariſe originally from miſtaken notions of the Divine Being, or at leaſt from want of attention to the nature of thoſe attributes which reaſon, as well as the holy ſcriptures, teaches us to aſſign to him. A temporary forgetfulneſs has, for the time, the ſame effect as real ignorance, but has this advantage, that it is much more eaſily remedied; ſince it is much leſs difficult to recollect our own ideas, than to obtain new ones. This is, I ſuppoſe, the ſtate of every man amongſt us, who is betrayed by his impatience under afflictions to murmur at Heaven. He knows, when he reflects calmly, that the world is neither eternal, nor independent; that we neither were produced, nor are preſerved, by chance. But that Heaven and earth, and the whole ſyſtem of things, were created by an infinite and perfect Being, who ſtill continues to ſuperintend and govern them. He knows that this Great Being is in-

finitely

finitely wiſe, and infinitely good; ſo that the end which he propoſes muſt neceſſarily be the final happineſs of thoſe beings that depend upon him, and the means, by which he promotes that end, muſt undoubtedly be the wiſeſt and the beſt. All this he is ſufficiently convinced of, when he is awakened to recollection; but his conviction is over-borne by the ſudden guſts of paſſion, and his impatience hurries him to wicked exclamations, before he can recal to his mind thoſe reaſonings, which, if attended to, would ſtifle every rebellious thought, and change his diſtruſt and diſcontent into confidence and tranquillity.

It very nearly concerns every man, ſince every man is expoſed, by the nature of human things, to trouble and calamities, to provide againſt the days of adverſity, by making ſuch ideas familiar to his mind as may defend him againſt any temptations to the ſin of *charging God fooliſhly*.

It is frequently obſerved in common life, that ſome favourite notion or inclination, long indulged, takes ſuch an entire poſſeſſion of a man's mind, and ſo engroſſes his faculties, as to mingle thoughts perhaps he is not himſelf conſcious of with almoſt all his conceptions, and influence his whole behaviour. It will often operate on occaſions with which it could ſcarcely be imagined to have any connection, and will diſcover itſelf, however it may lie concealed, either in trifling incidents, or important occurrences, when it is leaſt expected or foreſeen. It gives a particular direction to every ſentiment and action, and carries a man forward, as by a kind of reſiſtleſs impulſe, or inſuperable deſtiny.

As this unbounded dominion of ideas, long entertained by the fancy, and naturalized to the mind, is a very ſtrong argument againſt ſuffering ourſelves to dwell too long upon pleaſing dreams, or delightful falſehoods, or admitting any inordinate paſſion to inſinuate itſelf, and grow domeſtick; ſo it is a reaſon, of

equal

equal force, to engage us in a frequent, and intenſe meditation on thoſe important and eternal rules, which are to regulate our conduct, and rectify our minds; that the power of habit may be added to that of truth, that the moſt uſeful ideas may be the moſt familiar, and that every action of our lives may be carried on under the ſuperintendence of an over-ruling piety.

The man who has accuſtomed himſelf to conſider that he is always in the preſence of the Supreme Being, that every work of his hands is carried on, and every imagination of his heart formed, under the inſpection of his Creator, and his Judge, eaſily withſtands thoſe temptations which find a ready paſſage into a mind not guarded and ſecured by this awful ſenſe of the divine preſence.

He is not enticed by ill examples, becauſe the purity of God always occurs to his imagination; he is not betrayed to ſecurity by ſolitude, becauſe he never conſiders himſelf as alone.

The

The two great attributes of our Sovereign Creator, which ſeem moſt likely to influence our lives, and, by conſequence, moſt neceſſarily to claim our attention, are his juſtice and his mercy. Each of theſe may ſuggeſt conſiderations, very efficacious for the ſuppreſſion of wicked and unreaſonable murmurs.

The juſtice of God will not ſuffer him to afflict any man, without cauſe, or without retribution. Whenever we ſuffer, therefore, we are certain, either that we have, by our wickedneſs, procured our own miſeries, or that they are ſent upon us as further trials of our virtue, in order to prepare us for greater degrees of happineſs. Whether we ſuppoſe ourſelves to ſuffer for the ſake of puniſhment or probation, it is not eaſy to diſcover with what right we repine.

If our pains and labours be only peparatory to unbounded felicity; if we are *perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake*, or ſuffer by any conſequences of a good life; we ought to *rejoice*

joice and be exceeding glad, and to glorify the goodneſs of God, who, by uniting us in our ſufferings with Saints and Martyrs, will join us alſo in our reward.

But it is not uncharitable to believe of others, that this is not always the reaſon of their ſufferings, and certainly no man ought to believe it of himſelf, without a very ſevere and cautious examination, long continued, and often repeated; for nothing is more dangerous than ſpiritual pride. The man that eſteems himſelf a Saint will be in danger of relaxing his circumſpection, of ſtopping in his progreſs of virtue, and, if once he ſtops, of falling back into thoſe infirmities from which his imaginary exemption made him preſumptuous and ſupine. Every man therefore, when the hand of God is heavy upon him, muſt apply himſelf to an attentive, and exact retroſpection of his own life. He muſt enquire, if he has avoided all open enormities, and ſcandalous degrees of guilt; whether he is not puniſhed for ſome ſecret crime unknown to the world, and perhaps almoſt for-

forgotten by himſelf; whether, in ſurveying himſelf, he does not overlook ſome favourite ſin, ſome criminal indulgence; or whether he has not ſatisfied himſelf with increaſing his devotions, inſtead of reforming his morals, or whether, from too much confidence in his morality, he has not been too negligent of his devotions; and whether he has not contented himſelf with an imperfect and partial ſatisfaction for ſome injury done to his neighbour, when an adequate and compleat reparation was in his power.

To this enquiry he will be incited by remembering that God is juſt, that there is undoubtedly a reaſon for his miſery, which will probably be found in his own corruption. He will therefore, inſtead of murmuring at God, begin to examine himſelf; and when he has found the depravity of his own manners, it is more likely that he will admire the mercy, than complain of the ſeverity, of his Judge.

We have indeed ſo little right to complain of puniſhment, when it does not exceed the meaſure of the offence, that to bear it patiently hardly deſerves the name of virtue; but impatience under it is, in a high degree, fooliſh and criminal.

It is well known how partial every man is in his own cauſe, and therefore it is neceſſary to meditate much upon the juſtice of God, leſt we be tempted to think our puniſhments too great for our faults; and, in the midſt of our anguiſh and diſtreſs, *charge God fooliſhly*.

But we ſhall receive yet farther ſatisfaction from a frequent reflection on the *mercy* of God. We ſhall learn to conſider him, not only as the Governour, but as the Father, of the univerſe; as a Being infinitely gracious, whoſe puniſhments are not inflicted to gratify any paſſion of anger, or revenge, but to awaken us from the lethargy of ſin, and to recal us from the paths of deſtruction.

Every man has obſerved, that the greateſt part of thoſe who enjoy the pleaſures of this life, without interruption or reſtraint, are either entirely forgetful of any other ſtate, or at leaſt very little ſolicitous about it. Men are eaſily intoxicated with pleaſure, dazzled with magnificence, or elated with power. The moſt pathetick or rational diſcourſe upon eternity has ſeldom any laſting effect upon the gay, the young, the wealthy, and the proſperous. Even the Goſpel itſelf was firſt received by the poor.

The reaſon of this is not, becauſe Religion is beſt adapted to a gloomy and melancholy ſtate of the mind. For the truths of Religion are atteſted by evidence, which muſt be yielded to as ſoon as it is conſidered; and confirmed by proofs, which nothing but inattention can reſiſt. But to conſider, and weigh this evidence ſeriouſly and impartially, the mind muſt be abſtracted, in ſome meaſure, from the objects that ſurround us; objects that ſtrike us ſtrongly, not becauſe they

are

are great, but becauſe they are near; while the views of futurity affect us but faintly, not becauſe they are unimportant, but becauſe they are diſtant.

A conſtant conviction of the mercy of God, firmly implanted in our minds, will, upon the firſt attack of any calamity, eaſily induce us to reflect, that it is permitted by God to fall upon us, leſt we ſhould be too much enamoured of our preſent ſtate, and neglect to extend our proſpects into eternity.

Thus, by familiarizing to our minds the attributes of God, ſhall we, in a great meaſure, ſecure ourſelves againſt any temptation to repine at his arrangements; but ſhall probably ſtill more ſtrengthen our reſolution, and confirm our piety, by reflecting,

Secondly, On the ignorance of Man.

One general method of judging, and determining upon the value, or excellence of things, is by comparing one with another.

Thus it is, that we form a nation of wealth, greatneſs, or power. It is by comparing ourſelves with others, that we often make an eſtimate of our own happineſs, and even ſometimes of our virtue. They who repine at the ways of Providence, repine often, not becauſe they are miſerable, but becauſe they are not ſo happy as others; and imagine their afflictions dealt with a partial hand, not that they can conceive themſelves free from guilt, but becauſe they ſee, or think they ſee, others equally criminal, that ſuffer leſs. Should they be ſuppoſed to judge rightly of themſelves and others, ſhould it be conceived that, in rating their own excellencies, they are not miſled by their ſelf-love, or that they are not hindered by envy from diſcerning the virtues of thoſe whom they look upon as rivals for happineſs; yet unleſs they could prove, that the mercies which they have received, as below their merits, they have no reaſon to complain. He that has more than he deſerves is not to murmur merely becauſe he has leſs than another.

But when we judge thus confidently of others, we deceive ourſelves; we admit conjectures for certainties, and chimæras for realities. To determine the degrees of virtue and wickedneſs in particular men, is the prerogative only of that Being that ſearches the ſecrets of the heart, that knows what temptations each man has reſiſted; how far the means of grace have been afforded him, and how he has improved or neglected them; that ſees the force of every paſſion, knows the power of every prejudice, attends to every conflict of the mind, and marks all the ſtruggles of imperfect virtue. He only, who gave us our faculties and abilities, knows when we err by inſurmountable ignorance, or when we deviate from the right by negligence or preſumption. He only, that knows every circumſtance of life, and every motion of the mind, can tell how far the crimes, or virtues, of each man are to be puniſhed or rewarded. No man can ſay, that he is better than another, becauſe no man can tell, how far the other was enabled to reſiſt temptation,

or what incidents might concur to overthrow his virtue. Nor are we able to decide, with much greater certainty, upon the happineſs of others. We ſee only the ſuperficies of men, without knowing what paſſes within. Splendour, equipage, and luxury, are not always accompanied by happineſs; but are more frequently the wretched ſolaces of a mind diſtracted with perplexities, and harraſſed with terrours. Men are often driven, by reflection and remorſe, into the hurries of buſineſs, or of pleaſure, and fly from the terrifying ſuggeſtions of their own thoughts to banquets and to courts.

Proſperity and happineſs are very different, though by thoſe who undertake to judge of the ſtate of others they are always confounded. It is poſſible to know that another is proſperous, that his revenues increaſe, that his dependants grow more numerous, that his ſchemes ſucceed, and his reputation advances. But we cannot tell how much all theſe promote his happineſs, becauſe we cannot judge how much they may engage his care,

care, or inflame his desires; how much he may fear his enemies, or suspect his friends. We know not how much this seeming felicity may be impaired by his folly, or his guilt; and therefore he that murmurs at the inequality of human happiness, or accuses Providence of partiality, forgets his own imperfections, and determines rashly, where he cannot judge.

Let every one then whom God shall visit with affliction humble himself before him, with steady confidence in his mercy, and unfeigned submission to his justice! Let him remember that his sins are the cause of his miseries, that his troubles are sent to awaken him to reflection, and that the evils of this life may be improved to his eternal advantage, if, instead of adding sin to sin, and *charging God foolishly*, he applies himself seriously to the great work of self-examination and repentance.

For surely the frailty of this life, and the uncertainty of all human happiness, is proved

by every view of the world about us, and every reflection upon ourſelves. Let not death arreſt us in a ſtate of mind unfit to ſtand the trial of eternal juſtice, or to obtain the privileges of infinite mercy! Let it not ſurprize us engaged in ſchemes of vanity, or wiſhes of empty pleaſure! Let death, which may ſeize us now, which will ſeize us at ſome time, equally terrible, find us, whenever it ſhall come, animated with the love of God, ſubmiſſive to his eternal will, and diffuſed in univerſal charity and benevolence to our brethren.

Let this inſtant begin a new life; and every future minute improve it! Then, in exchange for riches, honours, or ſenſual delights, we may obtain the tranquillity of a good conſcience, and that *peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding*.

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SERMON IV.

EXODUS, XX. 16.

Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour.

NOTHING is more common than for men to make partial and abſurd diſtinctions between vices of equal enormity, and to obſerve ſome of the divine commands with great ſcrupulouſneſs; while they violate others, equally important, without any concern, or the leaſt apparent conſciouſneſs of guilt.

That to do our duty in part is better than entirely to diſregard it, cannot be denied; and he that avoids ſome crimes, from the fear

fear of diſpleaſing God, is doubtleſs far more innocent than he that has thrown off all reſtraint, has forgotten the diſtinctions of good and evil, and complies with every temptation. But it is a very dangerous miſtake, to conceive that any man, by obeying one law, acquires the liberty of breaking another; or that all ſins, equally odious to God, or hurtful to men, are not, with equal care, to be avoided.

We may frequently obſerve, that men, who would abhor the thought of violating the property of another, by direct methods of oppreſſion or rapine, men, on all common occaſions, not only juſt, but kind and compaſſionate, willing to relieve the neceſſitous, and active in the protection of the injured, will neverthelſs invade the characters of others with defamation and calumny, and deſtroy a reputation without remorſe.

If every day did not convince us, how little either good or bad men are conſiſtent with themſelves, it might be wondered, how men

men, who own their obligations to the practice of ſome duties, can overlook in themſelves the omiſſion of others equally important, and enjoined by the ſame authority; and that thoſe who avoid *theft*, becauſe they are forbidden *to ſteal*, do not equally abſtain from *calumny*, ſince they are no leſs forbidden *to bear falſe witneſs againſt their neighbour*; a prohibition, of which I ſhall endeavour to explain the nature, and enforce the neceſſity, by ſhewing,

Firſt, What are the different ſenſes, in which a man may be ſaid *to bear falſe witneſs againſt his neighbour*.

Secondly, The enormity of the ſin of *bearing falſe witneſs*.

Thirdly, What reflections may beſt enable us to avoid it.

The higheſt degree of guilt forbidden by this law of God, is falſe teſtimony in a literal ſenſe, or deliberate and ſolemn perjury in a court

court of juſtice, by which the life of an innocent man is taken away, the rightful owner ſtripped of his poſſeſſions, or an oppreſſour ſupported in his uſurpations. This is a crime that includes robbery and murder, ſublimed to the higheſt ſtate of enormity, and heightened with the moſt atrocious aggravations. He that robs or murders by this method, not only does it, by the nature of the action, with calmneſs and premeditation, but by making the name of God a ſanction to his wickedneſs. Upon this it is unneceſſary to dwell long, ſince men, arrived at this height of corruption, are ſcarcely to be reformed by argument, or perſuaſion; and indeed ſeldom ſuffer themſelves to be reaſoned with, or admoniſhed. It may be however proper to obſerve, that he who is ever ſo remotely the cauſe of any wickedneſs, if he really deſigns, and willingly promotes it, is guilty of that action in the ſame, or nearly the ſame, degree with the immediate perpetrator; and therefore he that ſuborns a falſe witneſs, or procures ſuch a one to be ſuborned, whether in his own cauſe, or in that

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of another, is guilty of the crime of perjury in its utmoſt extent.

Nor is that man only perjured, who delivers for truth what he certainly knows to be falſe; but he likewiſe that aſſerts what he does not know to be true. For as an oath taken implies, in the opinion of the magiſtrate who adminiſters it, a knowledge of the fact required to be proved, he that, by offering himſelf as an evidence, declares himſelf acquainted with what he is ignorant of, is guilty of bearing falſe witneſs, ſince, though what he ſwears ſhould happen to be true, it is not true that he knew it.

Such remarks as theſe ſeem, at the firſt view, very trifling, becauſe they are obvious, and yet are made neceſſary by the conduct of mankind. Every man almoſt has had opportunities of obſerving, with what groſs and artleſs deluſions men impoſe upon themſelves; how readily they diſtinguiſh between actions, in the eye of juſtice and of reaſon, equally criminal; how often they hope to

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elude the vengeance of heaven, by ſubſtituting others to perpetrate the villainies they contrive; how often they mock God by groundleſs excuſes; and how often they voluntarily ſhut their eyes, to leap into deſtruction.

There is another ſenſe in which a man may me ſaid to *bear falſe witneſs againſt his neighbour*, a lower degree of the crime forbidden in the text, a degree, in which multitudes are guilty of it; or, rather, from which ſcarcely any are entirely free. He, that attacks the reputation of another by calumny, is doubtleſs, according to the malignity of the report, chargeable with the breach of this commandment.

Yet this is ſo univerſal a practice, that it is ſcarcely accounted criminal, or numbered among thoſe ſins which require repentance. Defamation is become one of the amuſements of life, a curſory part of converſation and ſocial entertainment. Men ſport away the reputation of others, without the leaſt

reflection upon the injury which they are doing, and applaud the happineſs of their own invention, if they can increaſe the mirth of a feaſt, or animate conviviality, by ſlander and detraction.

How it comes to paſs, that men do not perceive the abſurdity of diſtinguiſhing in ſuch a manner between themſelves and others, as to conceive that conduct innocent in themſelves, which, in others, they would make no difficulty of condemning, it is not eaſy to tell. Yet it is apparent, that every man is ſufficiently ſenſible, when his own character is attacked, of the cruelty and injuſtice of calumny; and it is not leſs evident, that thoſe will animadvert, with all the wantonneſs of malice, upon the moral irregularities of others, whom the leaſt reflection upon their own lives kindles into fury, and exaſperates to the utmoſt ſeverities of revenge.

To invent a defamatory falſehood, to rack the invention for the ſake of diſguiſing it with circumſtances of probability, and propagate

pagate it induſtriouſly, till it becomes popular, and takes root in the minds of men, is ſuch a continued act of malice, as nothing can palliate.

Nor will it be a ſufficient vindication to alledge, that the report, though not wholly, yet in part is true, and that it was no unreaſonable ſuſpicion that ſuggeſted the reſt. For, if ſuſpicion be admitted for certainty, every man's happineſs muſt be entirely in the power of thoſe bad men, whoſe conſciouſneſs of guilt makes them eaſily judge ill of others, or whom a natural, or habitual jealouſy inclines to imagine frauds or villainies, where none are intended. And if ſmall failings may be aggravated at the pleaſure of the relator, who may not, however cautious, be made infamous and deteſtable? A calumny, in which falſehood is complicated with truth, and malice is aſſiſted by probability, is more dangerous, but therefore leſs innocent, than unmixed forgery, and groundleſs invectives.

Neither is the firſt authour only of a calumny a *falſe witneſs againſt his neighbour*, but he likewiſe that diſſeminates and promotes it; ſince, without his aſſiſtance, it would periſh as ſoon as it is produced, would evaporate in the air without effect, and hurt none but him that uttered it. He that blows a fire for the deſtruction of a city, is no leſs an incendiary than he that kindled it. And the man that imagines he may, without a crime, circulate a calumny which he has received from another, may, with equal reaſon, conceive, that though it be murder to prepare poiſons, it may be innocent to diſperſe them.

Many are the pleas and excuſes, with which thoſe, who cannot deny this practice, endeavour to palliate it. They frequently aſſert, in their own juſtification, that they do not know the relation, which they hand about, to be falſe. But to thoſe it may be juſtly replied, that before they ſpread a report to the prejudice of others, they ought, if not to know that it is true, at leaſt to believe it

upon ſome reaſonable grounds. They ought not to aſſiſt a random whiſper, or drive forward a flying tale; they ought not eagerly to catch at an opportunity of hurting, or add weight to a blow which may perhaps be undeſerved.

It may happen indeed, that a calumny may be ſupported by ſuch teſtimony, and connected with ſuch probabilities, as may deceive the circumſpect and juſt; and the reporter, in ſuch caſes, is by no means to be charged with bearing falſe witneſs; becauſe to believe and diſbelieve is not in our power; for there is a certain degree of evidence, to which a man cannot but yield. He, therefore, who is deceived himſelf, cannot be accuſed of deceiving others, and is only ſo far blameable, as he contributed to the diſhonour or prejudice of another, by ſpreading his faults without any juſt occaſion, or lawful cauſe. For to relate reproachful truths, only for the pleaſure of depreſſing the reputation of our neighbour, is far from being innocent. The crime indeed doth not fall under the head of calumny,

ny, but only differs from it in the falſehood, not in the malice.

There is another occaſion made uſe of, by which, if this fault could eſcape from cenſure, many others might enjoy the ſame advantage. It is urged by ſome, that they do not adopt the tale, 'till it is generally received, and only promote what they cannot hinder. But how muſt wickedneſs be controuled, if its prevalence be a reaſon for compliance? Is it equitable and juſt to coaleſce with oppreſſors, becauſe they are already too powerful for the injured to reſiſt? Thus any man might vindicate rebellion, by affirming that he did not join with the rebels, 'till they were already numerous enough to dethrone their prince. Thus a man may exempt himſelf from blame, for betraying his truſt, and ſelling his country, by alledging that others had already ſold it, and he only entered into the combination, that he might ſhare the reward of perfidy. But it requires few arguments to ſhew the folly of ſuch pleas as theſe. It is the duty of every man to regulate his

conduct, not by the example of others, or by his own ſurmiſes, but by the invariable rules of equity and truth. Wickedneſs muſt be oppoſed by ſome, or virtue would be entirely driven out of the world. And who muſt oppoſe it in extremities, if, as it increaſes more, it be leſs criminal to yield without reſiſtance? If this excuſe will vindicate one man, it will vindicate another; and no man will be found, who is obliged to maintain a poſt, from which others may fly without a crime, and to endeavour to reform the world, by which it is no reproach to be vitiated. If this reaſoning were juſt, there might be a ſtate of general depravity, in which wickedneſs might loſe its guilt, ſince every man might be led away by predominant corruption, and the univerſality of vice become its own defence.

In ſuch a ſituation indeed, there is a neceſſity for an uncommon firmneſs and reſolution to perſiſt in the right, without regard to ridicule on the one hand, or intereſt on the other. But this reſolution muſt be ſummoned; we muſt call up all our ſtrength, and awaken all

all our caution, and in defiance of iniquity, however warranted by faſhion, or ſupported by power, maintain an unſhaken integrity, and reproach the world by a good example, if we cannot amend it.

There is yet another way, by which we may partake, in ſome meaſure, of the ſin of *bearing falſe witneſs.* That he, who does not hinder the commiſſion of a crime, involves himſelf in the guilt, cannot be denied; and that his guilt is yet more flagrant, if, inſtead of obſtructing, he encourages it, is equally evident. He therefore that receives a calumny with applauſe, or liſtens to it with a ſilent approbation, muſt be at leaſt chargeable with conniving at wrong, which will be found no trivial accuſation, when we have conſidered,

Secondly, the enormity of the ſin of *bearing falſe witneſs.*

The malignity of an offence ariſes, either from the motives that prompted it, or the conſequences produced by it.

If we examine the ſin of calumny by this rule, we ſhall find both the motives and conſequences of the worſt kind. We ſhall find its cauſes and effects concurring to diſtinguiſh it from common wickedneſs, and rank it with thoſe crimes that pollute the earth, and blacken human nature.

The moſt uſual incitement to defamation is envy, or impatience of the merit, or ſucceſs, of others; a malice raiſed not by any injury received, but merely by the ſight of that happineſs which we cannot attain. This is a paſſion, of all others moſt hurtful and contemptible; it is pride complicated with lazineſs; pride which inclines us to wiſh ourſelves upon the level with others, and lazineſs which hinders us from purſuing our inclinations with vigour and aſſiduity. Nothing then remains but that the envious man endeavour to ſtop thoſe, by ſome artifice, whom he will not ſtrive to overtake, and reduce his ſuperiours to his own meanneſs, ſince he cannot riſe to their elevation. To this end he

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examines their conduct with a reſolution to condemn it; and, if he can find no remarkable defects, makes no ſcruple to aggravate ſmaller errours, 'till, by adding one vice to another, and detracting from their virtues by degrees, he has diveſted them of that reputation which obſcured his own, and left them no qualities to be admired or rewarded.

Calumnies are ſometimes the offspring of reſentment. When a man is oppoſed in a deſign which he cannot juſtify, and defeated in the proſecution of ſchemes of tyranny, extortion, or oppreſſion, he ſeldom fails to revenge his overthrow by blackening that integrity which effected it. No rage is more fierce than that of a villain diſappointed of thoſe advantages which he has purſued by a long train of wickedneſs. He has forfeited the eſteem of mankind, he has burthened his conſcience, and hazarded his future happineſs, to no purpoſe, and has now nothing to hope but the ſatisfaction of involving thoſe, who have broken his meaſures, in misfortunes and diſgrace. By wretches like theſe it is no wonder if the

vileſt arts of detraction are practiſed without ſcruple, ſince both their reſentment and their intereſt direct them to depreſs thoſe, whoſe influence and authority will be employed againſt them.

But what can be ſaid of thoſe who, without being impelled by any violence of paſſion, without having received any injury or provocation, and without any motives of intereſt, vilify the deſerving and the worthleſs without diſtinction; and, merely to gratify the levity of temper and incontinence of tongue, throw out aſperſions equally dangerous with thoſe of virulence and enmity?

Theſe always reckon themſelves, and are commonly reckoned by thoſe whoſe gaiety they promote, among the benevolent, the candid, and the humane; men without gall or malignity, friends to good-humour, and lovers of a jeſt. But, upon a more ſerious eſtimation, will they not be, with far greater propriety, claſſed with the cruel and the ſelfiſh wretches that feel no anguiſh at ſacri-

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ficing the happineſs of mankind to the loweſt views, to the poor ambition of excelling in ſcurrility? To deſerve the exalted character of humanity and good-nature, a man muſt mean *well*; it is not ſufficient to mean *nothing*. He muſt act and think with generous views, not with a total diſregard of all the conſequences of his behaviour. Otherwiſe, with all his wit and all his laughter, what character can he deſerve, but that of *the fool, who ſcatters fire-brands, arrows, and death, and ſays, am I not in ſport?*

The conſequences of this crime, whatever be the inducement to commit it, are equally pernicious. He that attacks the reputation of another, invades the moſt valuable part of his property, and perhaps the only part which he can call his own. Calumny can take away what is out of the reach of tyranny and uſurpation, and what may enable the ſufferer to repair the injuries received from the hand of oppreſſion. The perſecutions of power may injure the fortune of a good man; but thoſe of calumny muſt complete his ruin.

Nothing

Nothing can ſo much obſtruct the progreſs of virtue, as the defamation of thoſe that excel in it. For praiſe is one motive, even in the beſt minds, to ſuperiour and diſtinguiſhing degrees of goodneſs; and therefore he that reduces all men to the ſame ſtate of infamy, at leaſt deprives them of one reward which is due to merit, and takes away one incitement to it. But the effect does not terminate here. Calumny deſtroys that influence, and power of example, which operates much more forcibly upon the minds of men, than the ſolemnity of laws, or the fear of puniſhment. Our natural and real power is very ſmall; and it is by the aſcendant which he has gained, and the eſteem in which he is held, that any man is able to govern others, to maintain order in ſociety, or to perform any important ſervice to mankind, to which the united endeavours of numbers are required. This aſcendant, which, when conferred upon bad men by ſuperiority of riches, or hereditary honour, is frequently made uſe of to corrupt and deprave the world, to juſtify debauchery, and ſhelter villainy,

villainy, might be employed, if it were to be obtained only by deſert, to the nobleſt purpoſes. It might diſcountenance vanity and folly; it might make the faſhion co-operate with the laws, and reform thoſe upon whom reaſon and conviction have no force.

Calumny differs from moſt other injuries in this dreadful circumſtance. He who commits it, never can repair it. A falſe report may ſpread, where a recantation never reaches; and an accuſation muſt certainly fly faſter than a defence, while the greater part of mankind are baſe and wicked. The effects of a falſe report cannot be determined, or circumſcribed. It may check a Hero in his attempts for the promotion of the happineſs of his country, or a Saint in his endeavours for the propagation of truth.

Since therefore this ſin is ſo deſtructive to mankind, and, by conſequence, ſo deteſtable in the ſight of God, it is neceſſary that we enquire,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, What reflections may beſt enable us to avoid it.

The way to avoid effects is to avoid the cauſes. Whoever therefore would not be tempted *to bear falſe witneſs*, muſt endeavour to ſuppreſs thoſe paſſions which may incite him to it. Let the envious man conſider, that by detracting from the character of others, he in reality adds nothing to his own; and the malicious man, that nothing is more inconſiſtent with every law of God, and inſtitution of men, than implacability and revenge.

If men would ſpend more time in examining their own lives, and inſpecting their own characters, they would have leſs leiſure, and leſs inclination, to remark with ſeverity upon others. They would eaſily diſcover, that it will not be for their advantage to exaſperate their neighbour, and that a ſcandalous falſehood may be eaſily revenged by a reproachful truth.

It was determined by our bleſſed Saviour, in a caſe of open and unconteſted guilt, that *he who was without fault*, ſhould *caſt the firſt ſtone*. This ſeems intended to teach us compaſſion even to the failings of bad men; and certainly that religion which extends ſo much indulgence to the bad, as to reſtrain us from the utmoſt rigour of puniſhment, cannot be doubted to require that the good ſhould be exempted from calumny and reproach.

Let it be always remembered, that charity is the height of religious excellence; and that it is one of the characteriſticks of this virtue, that it *thinketh no ill of others!*

SERMON

SERMON V.

(PREACHED AT ASHBOURN.)

1 CORINTHIANS VI. 8.

Nay, you do wrong and defraud, and that your Brethren.

TO ſubdue paſſion, and regulate deſire, is the great taſk of man, as a moral agent; a taſk, for which natural reaſon, however aſſiſted and enforced by human laws, has been found inſufficient, and which cannot be performed but by the help of Religion.

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The paſſions are divided by moraliſts into iraſcible and concupiſcible; the paſſions of reſentment, and the paſſions of deſire. The danger of the iraſcible paſſions, the miſchiefs of anger, envy, and revenge, every man knows, by evil which he has felt, or evil which he has perpetrated. In their lower degrees, they produce brutality, outrage, contumely, and calumny; and, when they are inflamed to the utmoſt, have too often riſen to violence and bloodſhed.

Of theſe paſſions, the miſchief is ſometimes great, but not very frequent; for we are taught to watch and oppoſe them, from our earlieſt years. Their malignity is univerſally known, and as univerſally dreaded. The occaſions that can raiſe them high, do not often occur; and when they are raiſed, if there be no immediate opportunity of gratifying them, they yield to reaſon, and perſuaſion, or ſubſide by the ſoothing influence of time.

Of

Of the iraſcible paſſions, the direct aim, and preſent purpoſe, is the hurt, or miſery of another; of the concupiſcible paſſions, the proper motive is our own good. It is therefore no reproach to human nature, that the concupiſcible paſſions are more prevalent; for, as it is more natural, it is more juſt, to deſire our own good, than another's evil.

The deſire of happineſs is inſeparable from a rational being, acquainted, by experience, with the various gradations of pain and pleaſure. The knowledge of different degrees of happineſs ſeems neceſſary to the excitement of deſire, and the ſtimulation of activity. He that had never felt pain, would not fear it, nor uſe any precaution to prevent it. He who had been always equally at eaſe, would not know, that his condition admitted any improvement, and therefore could have no end to purſue, or purpoſe to proſecute. But man, in his preſent ſtate, knowing of how much good he is capable, and to how many evils he is expoſed, has his mind perpetually em-

ployed, in defence, or in acquiſition, in ſecuring that which he has, or attaining that which, he believes, he either does, or ſhall, want.

He that deſires happineſs muſt neceſſarily deſire the means of happineſs, muſt wiſh to appropriate, and accumulate, whatever may ſatisfy his deſires. It is not ſufficient to be without want. He will try to place himſelf beyond the fear of want; and endeavour to provide future gratifications for future wiſhes, and lay up in ſtore future proviſions for future neceſſities.

It is by the effect of this care to provide againſt the evils, and to attain the bleſſings, of life, that human ſociety has its preſent form. For this purpoſe profeſſions are ſtudied, and trades learned; dangers are encountered, and labour endured. For this reaſon every man educates his ſon in ſome uſeful art, which, by making him neceſſary to others, may oblige others to repay him what is neceſſary to himſelf. The general em-

employment of mankind is to increaſe pleaſure, or remove the preſſure of pain. Theſe are the vital principles of action, that fill ports with ſhips, ſhops with manufactures, and fields with huſbnadmen, that keep the ſtateſman diligent in attendance, and the trader active in his buſineſs.

It is apparently the opinion of the civilized world, that he who would be happy muſt be rich. In riches the goods of life are compendiouſly contained. They do not enlarge our own perſonal powers; but they enable us to employ the powers of others for our advantage. He who cannot make what he wants, will however eaſily procure it, if he can pay an artiſt. He who ſuffers any remediable inconvenience, needs not to ſuffer it long, if he can reward the labour of thoſe who are able to remove it. Riches will make an ignorant man prudent by another's wiſdom, and a weak man vigorous by another's ſtrength. It can, therefore, be no wonder, that riches are generally deſired; and that almoſt every man is buſy, through his whole

life, in gaining, or in keeping them, for himſelf, or his poſterity.

As there is no deſire ſo extenſive, or ſo continual in its exertions, that poſſeſſes ſo many minds, or operates with ſuch reſtleſs activity; there is none that deviates into greater irregularity, or more frequently corrupts the heart of man, than the wiſh to enlarge poſſeſſion and accumulate wealth.

In a diſcourſe, intended for popular inſtruction, it would be of little utility to mention the ambition of Kings, and diſplay the cruelty of Conquerors. To ſlaughter thouſands in a day, to ſpread deſolation over wide and fertile regions, and to carry rapine and deſtruction indiſcriminately from one country to another, can be the crime only of thoſe few who have ſceptres in their hands; and, even among them, the wantonneſs of war is not very common in our days. But it is a ſufficient evidence of the power of intereſt, that ſuch acts ſhould ever have been perpetrated; that there could ever be any man,

man, willing to augment his wealth, or extend his power, by ſlaughter and devaſtation; or able to perſuade himſelf, that he might purchaſe advantages, which he could enjoy only in imagination, at the expence of the lives of thouſands of his ſubjects, as well as his adverſaries; of adverſaries that never had injured, or offended him, and of ſubjects whom it was his duty and his engagement to preſerve and to protect.

Nor is it neceſſary to mention crimes, which are commonly found amongſt the loweſt of mankind, the crimes of robbery and theft. For, though they are too common, their enormity is ſufficiently underſtood by the laws which are enacted againſt them, and ſufficiently menaced by the terrours which thoſe laws hold out. They are ſo apparently deſtructive of ſocial ſecurity, their conſequences are ſo eaſily perceived, and their perniciouſneſs ſo generally acknowledged, that to be ſuſpected of them is to be infamous; and to be detected in the commiſſion of them is to be expoſed to puniſhment, and often to death.

But there is another mode of injuring the property of others, and of gaining unjuſt advantages, which, though not equally liable, at all times, to puniſhment, with theft and robbery, is, in its own nature, equally criminal, and perhaps more pernicious; therefore, equally open to the cenſures of reaſon and religion. This ſpecies of guilt is diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of *fraud*; a word which, when uttered, really excites a due degree of deteſtation, and which thoſe, who practiſe it, perhaps diſguiſe to their conſciences by ſtill ſofter terms.

But that ſuch diſguiſes may deceive the ſoul no longer; and that what is univerſally miſchievous may be totally abhorred; I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

Firſt, The nature of *fraud*, and the temptations to practiſe it.

Secondly, How much it is contrary to the rules of religion, and how much it obſtructs the happineſs of the world.

The

The nature of fraud, as diſtinct from other violations of right or property, ſeems to conſiſt in this, that the man injured is induced to concur in the act by which the injury is done. Thus, to take away any thing valuable, without the owner's knowledge, is a *theft*; to take it away, againſt his conſent, by threats or force, is a *robbery*; to borrow it, without intention of returning it, is a *fraud*, becauſe the owner conſents to the act, by which it paſſed out of his own hands.

All *fraud*, therefore, ſuppoſes deceit, either in the affirmation of what is falſe, or the ſuppreſſion of what is true; for no man willingly wrongs himſelf. He muſt be deceived, either by falſe appearances of the preſent, or by falſe promiſes of the future, by a diſplay of fictitious advantages, or an artful concealment of certain inconveniences.

As it often happens, that in committing a *fraud*, or perſuading a man to injure himſelf, a conſiderable degree of ſkill and dexterity is required; the fraudulent are often conſidered,

by themſelves and others, as poſſeſſing uncommon powers of underſtanding, ſo that, though the act itſelf is blamed, the artifice is admired. Conſcience is overpowered by vanity, and the ſhame of guilt is loſt in the pride of ſubtlety and acuteneſs.

It is to be feared, that the ſcience of overreaching is too cloſely connected with lucrative commerce. There are claſſes of men, who do little leſs than profeſs it, and who are ſcarcely aſhamed, when they are detected in impoſture. Such men live indeed without reputation. They are conſidered as exerciſing diſhonourable employments, but they are ſtill tolerated; and, however they may be deſpiſed, are very rarely puniſhed. The whole practice of buying and ſelling is indeed replete with temptation, which even a virtuous mind finds it difficult to reſiſt. * *A merchant ſhall hardly keep himſelf from doing wrong, and an huckſter ſhall not be freed from ſin.*

* Eccleſiaſticus, xxvi. 29.

Many

* *Many have ſinned for a ſmall matter; and he that ſeeketh for abundance, will turn his eyes away. As a nail ſticketh faſt between the joinings of the ſtones, ſo doth ſin ſtick cloſe between buying and ſelling.*

Such is the cenſure of the Son of Sirach, which ſurely cannot be heard without alarm and terrour,

It is, however, by no means to be admitted, that all trade is neceſſarily fraudulent, or that all traders are diſhoneſt. Every kind of life has its peculiar dangers, which the negligent incur, and the wiſe eſcape. The danger of a trader, like that of others, may be avoided by reſolution, vigilance, and prayer, by a conſtant reference of his actions to his eternal intereſt, and by the help of God, diligently implored.

That the neceſſity of this vigilance may be more ſtrongly recommended, it is fit that we conſider,

* Eccleſiaſticus, xxvii. 1, 2.

Secondly,

Secondly, How much the practice of *fraud* is contrary to religion, and how much it obſtructs the happineſs of the world.

The great rule, by which religion regulates all tranſactions between one man and another, is, that every man *ſhould do to others what he would expect that others*, in the ſame caſe, *ſhould do to him*. This rule is violated in every act of fraud. For, however the *children of the world* may forgive, or applaud, themſelves, when they *practiſe fraud*, they complain very loudly, when they *ſuffer* it. They then can clearly diſcern its baſeneſs, and its miſchief; and diſcover, that nothing deſerves praiſe but purity and goodneſs.

The crime of *fraud* has this aggravation, that it is generally an abuſe of confidence. Robberies of violence are committed commonly upon thoſe, to whom the robber is unknown. The lurking thief takes indiſcriminately what comes by chance within his reach. But deceit cannot be practiſed, unleſs

unleſs by ſome previous treaty, and gradual advance, by which diſtruſt is diſſipated, and an opinion of candour and integrity excited. *Fraud*, therefore, neceſſarily diſguiſes life with ſolicitude and ſuſpicion. He that has been deceived, knows not afterwards whom he can truſt, but grows timorous, reſerved, afraid alike of enemies and friends; and loſes, at leaſt, part of that benevolence which is neceſſary to an amiable and virtuous character.

Fraud is the more to be ſuppreſſed by univerſal deteſtation, as its effects can ſcarcely be limited. A thief ſeldom takes away what can much impoveriſh the loſer; but by *fraud*, the opulent may at once be reduced to indigence, and the proſperous diſtreſſed; the effects of a long courſe of induſtry may be ſuddenly annihilated, the proviſion made for age may be withdrawn, and the inheritance of poſterity intercepted.

For the particular application of this doctrine, I am ſorry, that my native place ſhould afford

afford an opportunity. But ſince this ſociety has called me to ſtand here before them, I hope no man will be offended, that I do my duty with fidelity and freedom. Truth requires, that I warn you againſt a ſpecies of fraud, ſometimes found amongſt you, and that of a very ſhameful and oppreſſive kind. When any man, whoſe contributions have had their due part in raiſing the fund for occaſional relief, is reduced by diſeaſe, or hurt, to want the ſupport which he has, perhaps, for many years, ſuppoſed himſelf gradually accumulating againſt the day of diſtreſs; and for which he has denied himſelf many gratifications; at the time, when he expects the beneficial effects of his prudence and parſimony; at that very time, every artifice is uſed to defeat his claim, and elude his right. He declares himſelf perhaps unable to work, by which nothing more can reaſonably be meant, than that he is no longer capable of labour equal to his livelihood. This man is found employing the remains of his ſtrength in ſome little office. For this ſurely he deſerves to be commended. But what

what has been the conſequence? He has been conſidered as an impoſtor, who claims the benefit of the fund by counterfeited incapacity; and that feeble diligence, which, among reaſonable and equitable men, gives him a title to eſteem and pity, is miſapplied, and miſrepreſented into a pretence for depriving him of his right, and this done by judges, who vainly imagine they ſhall be benefited themſelves by their own wicked determination.

It is always to be remembered, that a demand of ſupport from your common fund is not a petition for charity, but a claim to juſtice. The relief, thus demanded, is not a gift, but a debt. He that receives it, has firſt purchaſed it. The denial of it, therefore, is a fraud and a robbery; and fraud ſo much the more atrocious and deteſtable, as, by its nature, it muſt always be practiſed on the poor. When this ſuccour is required, there is no place for favour, or for reſentment. What is due muſt be paid, becauſe it is due. Other conſiderations have here no weight.

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The amiable and the perverſe, the good and the bad, have an equal right to the performance of their contract. He that has truſted the ſociety with his money, cannot, without breach of faith, be denied that payment, which, when he payed his contribution, was ſolemnly ſtipulated.

It has been always obſerved by the wiſe, that it is every man's real intereſt to be honeſt; and he who practiſes *fraud*, to the injury of others, ſhews, at the ſame time, how *fraud* may be practiſed againſt himſelf. Thoſe who have been forward in watching the ſteps of others, and have objected to payment when it was required, may live to be themſelves watched, and excluded by a precedent, which their own fraudulence, or malice, has incited them to eſtabliſh. They will then feel the folly of wickedneſs, and know the neceſſity of providing againſt the day of calamity by innocence and integrity; they will wiſh that they could claim the kindneſs of others, as a recompence for kindneſs formerly exhibited by themſelves.

Fraud

Fraud is the more hurtful, becauſe the wrong is often without redreſs. As he that is wronged by fradulent practices muſt always concur in the act that injured him; it is not always eaſy to aſcertain the exact limits of his agency, ſo as to know preciſely how far he was deceived. This, at leaſt, is ſeldom to be done without an enquiry and diſcuſſion, liable to many legal delays, and eludible by many artifices. The redreſs, therefore, is often more pernicious than the injury; and while the robber lurks in ſecret, or flies for his life, the man of *fraud* holds up his head with confidence, enjoys the fruits of his iniquity with ſecurity, and bids defiance to detection and to puniſhment.

But this triumph, however he may eſcape human judicatures, muſt end with his life. The time will come, and will come quickly, when he that has defrauded his neighbour muſt ſtand before the Judge of all the earth, a Judge whom he cannot deceive; and before whom, whatever he has taken wrong-

fully, without reſtitution, and without repentance, will lie heavy on his ſoul.

"Let him, therefore, that has ſtolen, ſteal no more!" let him who has gained by *fraud*, repent and reſtore, and live and die in the exerciſe of honeſty!

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SERMON VI.

2 CORINTHIANS ix. 7.

Every man according as he purpoſeth in his heart ſo let him give, not grudgingly, or of neceſſity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.

THE frequency with which the duty of alms-giving has of late been recommended; the perſpicuity with which it has, on many occaſions, been explained; the force of argument by which its neceſſity has been proved to the reaſon, and the ardour of zeal with which it has been impreſſed upon the paſſions; make it reaſonable to believe, that it is now generally underſtood, and that very few of thoſe, who frequent the publick worſhip, and attend with proper diligence to inſtruction, can receive much information, with regard to the excellence and importance of this virtue.

But as moſt of the crimes and miſeries of our lives ariſe rather from negligence, than ignorance; as thoſe obligations which are beſt known, are ſometimes, from the ſecurity to which the conſciouſneſs of our knowledge naturally betrays us, moſt eaſily forgotten, and as the impreſſions which are made upon the heart, however ſtrong or durable they may at firſt appear, are eaſily weakened by time, and effaced by the perpetual ſucceſſion of other objects, which croud the memory, and diſtract the attention; it is neceſſary that this great duty ſhould be frequently explained, that our ardour ſhould be rekindled by new motion, our conviction awakened by new perſuaſions, and our minds enlightened by frequent repetitions of the inſtructions, which, if not recollected, muſt quickly loſe their effect.

Every man, who has either applied himſelf to the examination of his own conduct with care proportioned to the importance of the enquiry, or indulged himſelf in the

more frequent employment of inſpecting the behaviour of others, has had many opportunities of obſerving, with how much difficulty the precepts of Religion are long preſerved in their full force; how inſenſibly the ways of virtue are forſaken, and into what depravity thoſe, who truſt too much to their own ſtrength, ſometimes fall, by neglecting to preſs forward, and to confirm their reſolution, by the ſame methods as they at firſt excited it. Innumerable temptations continually ſurround us, and innumerable obſtructions oppoſe us. We are lulled with indolence, we are ſeduced by pleaſure, we are perverted by bad examples, and we are betrayed by our own hearts. No ſooner do we, in compliance either with the vanities, or the buſineſs, of life, relax our attention to the doctrines of piety, than we grow cold and indifferent, dilatory and negligent. When we are again called to our duty, we find our minds entangled with a thouſand objections; we are ready to plead every avocation, however trifling, as an exemption from the neceſſity of holy practices; and,

becauſe we readily ſatisfy *ourſelves* with our excuſes, we are willing to imagine that we ſhall ſatisfy God, the God of infinite holineſs and juſtice, who ſees the moſt ſecret motions of our minds, who penetrates through all our hypocriſy, and upon whom diſinclination can be never impoſed for inability.

With regard to the duty of Charity, it is too common for men, of avaricious and worldly diſpoſitions, to imagine that they may be ſaved without compliance with a command ſo little agreeable to their inclinations; and therefore, though perhaps they cannot always reſiſt the force of argument, or repel conviction at its firſt aſſault, yet, as they do not willingly ſuffer their minds to dwell upon reaſonings which they ſcarcely wiſh to be true, or renew, by frequent recollection, that ſenſe of their duty which they have received, they quickly relapſe into their former ſordid inſenſibility, and, by indulging every conſideration which can be applied to the juſtification of parſimony,

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harden their hearts, and withhold their hands: and while they ſee the anguiſh of miſery, and hear the cries of want, can paſs by without pity, and without regard; and without even feeling any reproaches from their hearts, pray to God for that mercy which they have themſelves denied to their fellow-beings.

One of the pleas, which is alledged in juſtification of the neglect of Charity, is inability to practiſe it; an excuſe, when real, to which no objection can be made; for it cannot be expected, that any man ſhould give to another what he muſt himſelf want in the ſame degree. But this excuſe is too frequently offered by thoſe who are poor only in their own opinion, who have habituated themſelves to look on thoſe that are above, rather than on thoſe that are below them, and cannot account themſelves rich, while they ſee any richer; men who meaſure their revenues, not by the wants of nature, but by the demands of vanity; and who have nothing to give, only becauſe they

will not diminiſh any particle of their ſplendour, nor reduce the pomp of their equipage; who, while their tables are heaped with delicacies, and their houſes crouded with feſtal aſſemblies, ſuffer the poor to languiſh in the ſtreets in miſeries and in want, complain that their fortunes are not equal to the generoſity of their minds, and applaud their own inclinations to Charity and Mercy: inclinations which are never exerted in beneficence, becauſe they cannot ſpare any thing from their appetites and their pride.

Others there are, who frequently delight to dwell upon the excellency of Charity, and profeſs themſelves ready to comply with its precepts, whenever proper objects ſhall be propoſed, and an opportunity of proper application ſhall be found; but they pretend that they are ſo *well* informed, with regard to the perverſion of Charity, and diſcover ſo many ill effects of indiſtinguiſhing and careleſs liberality, that they are not eaſily ſatisfied with the occaſions which are offered them.

them. They are ſometimes afraid of encouraging idleneſs, and ſometimes of countenancing impoſture, and ſo readily find objections to every method of Charity that can be mentioned to them, that their good inclinations are of very little advantage to the reſt of mankind; but however they congratulate themſelves upon their merit, and ſtill applaud that generoſity by which calamity was never ſoftened, and by which want never was relieved.

But that all theſe imaginary pleas may be once more confuted, that the opportunity of Charity, which Providence has this day put into our hands, may not be neglected, and that our alms may be given in ſuch a manner as may obtain acceptance with the great Judge of all the earth, who has promiſed to ſhew mercy to the merciful, I ſhall endeavour to lay before you,

Firſt, the importance and neceſſity of the practice of Charity.

Secondly, The diſpoſition of mind, which is neceſſary to make our alms acceptable to God.

Thirdly, The reaſonableneſs of laying hold on the preſent opportunity for the exerciſe of our charity.

And, Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the importance and neceſſity of the practice of Charity. The importance and neceſſity of Charity is ſo evident, that as it might be hoped that no proof could be neceſſary, ſo it is difficult to produce any arguments which do not occur of themſelves to every reaſonable and attentive mind. For whither can we turn our thoughts, or direct our eyes, where we ſhall not find ſome motive to the exerciſe of charity?

If we look up to heaven, which we have been taught to conſider as the particular reſidence of the Supreme Being, we find there our Creatour, our Preſerver, and our Judge; our Creatour, whoſe infinite power gave us our exiſtence, and who has taught us, by that gift, that bounty is agreeable to his nature; our Preſerver, of whoſe aſſiſtance and protection

tection we are, every day and every moment, in need, and whoſe favour we can hope to ſecure only by imitating his goodneſs, and endeavouring the aſſiſtance and protection of each other; and our Judge, who has already declared that the merciful ſhall obtain mercy, and that in the awful day, in which every man ſhall be recompenſed according to his works, he that *ſoweth* ſparingly ſhall *reap* alſo ſparingly,

If we caſt our eyes over the earth, and extend our obſervations through the ſyſtem of human beings, what ſhall we find but ſcenes of miſery and innumerable varieties of calamity and diſtreſs, the pains of ſickneſs, the wounds of caſualty, the gripings of hunger, and the cold of nakedneſs; wretches wandering without an habitation, expoſed to the contempt of the proud, and the inſults of the cruel, goaded forward, by the ſtings of poverty, to diſhoneſt acts, which perhaps relieve their preſent miſery, only to draw ſome more dreadful diſtreſs upon them? And what are we taught, by all theſe different ſtates of

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unhappineſs? what, but the neceſſity of that virtue by which they are relieved; by which the orphan may be ſupplied with a father, and the widow with a defender; by which nakedneſs may be cloathed, and ſickneſs ſet free from adventitious pains; the ſtranger ſolaced in his wanderings, and the hungry reſtored to vigour and to eaſe?

If we turn from theſe melancholy proſpects, and caſt our eyes upon ourſelves, what ſhall we find, but a precarious and frail being, ſurrounded on every ſide with danger, and beſieged with miſeries and with wants? miſeries, which we cannot avert by our own power, and wants which our own abilities cannot ſupply. We perceive ourſelves wholly unable to ſtand alone, and compelled to ſolicit, every moment, the aſſiſtance of our fellow-creatures; whom perhaps our Maker enables us at preſent to repay by mutual kindneſs, but whom we know not how ſoon we may be neceſſitated to implore, without the capacity of returning their beneficence.

This reflection ſurely ought immediately to convince us of the neceſſity of Charity. Prudence, even without Religion, ought to admoniſh every one to aſſiſt the helpleſs, and relieve the wretched, that, when the day of diſtreſs ſhall come upon him, he may confidently aſk that aſſiſtance which he himſelf, in his proſperity, never did deny.

As it has pleaſed God to place us in a ſtate, in which we are ſurrounded with innumerable temptations; ſo it has pleaſed him, on many occaſions, to afford us temporal incitements to virtue, as a counterbalance to the allurements of ſin; and to ſet before us rewards which may be obtained, and puniſhments which may be ſuffered, before the final determination of our future ſtate. As Charity is one of our moſt important duties, we are preſſed to its practice by every principle of ſecular, as well as religious, wiſdom; and no man can ſuffer himſelf to be diſtinguiſhed for hardneſs of heart, without danger of feeling the conſequence of his wickedneſs in his preſent ſtate; becauſe no man can ſecure

cure to himſelf the continuance of riches, or of power; nor can prove, that he ſhall not himſelf *want* the aſſiſtance which he now *denies*, and perhaps be compelled to implore it from thoſe whoſe petition he now rejects, and whoſe miſeries he now inſults. Such is the inſtability of human affairs, and ſo frequently does God aſſert his government of the world, by exalting the low, and depreſſing the powerful.

If we endeavour to conſult higher wiſdom than our own, with relation to this duty, and examine the opinions of the reſt of mankind, it will be found, that all the nations of the earth, however they may differ with regard to every other tenet, yet agree in the celebration of benevolence, as the moſt amiable diſpoſition of the heart, and the foundation of all happineſs. We ſhall find that, in every place, men are loved and honoured in proportion to the gifts which they have conferred upon mankind, and that nothing but Charity can recommend *one* man to the affection of *another*.

But if we appeal, as is undoubtedly reaſonable and juſt, from human wiſdom to divine, and ſearch the Holy Scriptures, to ſettle our notions of the importance of this duty, we ſhall need no further incitements to its practice; for every part of that ſacred volume is filled with *precepts* that direct, or *examples* that inculcate it. The practice of hoſpitality among the Patriarchs, the confidence of Job, amidſt his afflictions, ariſing from the remembrance of his former Charity.

The precepts of the Prophets, and the conduct of the holy men of all times, concur to enforce the duty of attending to the cries of miſery, and endeavouring to relieve the calamities of life.

But ſurely all further proof will be ſuperſeded, when the declaration of our bleſſed Redeemer is remembered, who has condeſcended to inform us that thoſe who have ſhewn mercy ſhall find mercy from him, that the practice of Charity will be the great teſt by which we ſhall be judged, and that thoſe, and thoſe only, who have given food

to

to the hungry, and raiment to the naked, ſhall, at the final doom, be numbered by the Son of God amongſt the Bleſſed of his Father.

There can nothing more be added to ſhow the neceſſity of the practice of Charity; for what can be expected to move him, by whom everlaſting felicity is diſregarded; and who hears, without emotion, never-ending miſeries threatened by Omnipotence? It therefore now remains that we enquire,

Secondly,

How we may practiſe this duty, in a manner pleaſing to him who commanded it; or what diſpoſition of mind is neceſſary to make our alms acceptable to God.

Our Saviour, as he has informed us of the neceſſity of Charity, has not omitted to teach us likewiſe how our acts of Charity are to be performed. And from his own precepts, and thoſe of his Apoſtles, may be learned all the cautions neceſſary to obviate the deceit of our own hearts, and to preſerve us from falling into follies dangerous to our ſouls, while we imagine ourſelves advancing in the favour of God.

We

We are commanded by Jeſus Chriſt, when we give our alms, to diveſt ourſelves of pride, vain-glory, and deſire of applauſe; we are forbidden to give, that we may be ſeen of men, and inſtructed ſo to conduct our Charity, that it may be known to our Father which ſeeth in ſecret. By this precept it is not to be underſtood, that we are forbidden to give alms in publick, or where we may be ſeen of men; for our Saviour has alſo commanded, that our *light ſhould ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.* The meaning, therefore, of this text is not that we ſhould forbear to give alms in the ſight of men, but that we ſhould not ſuffer the preſence of men to act as the motive to our Charity, nor regard their praiſe as any object to our wiſhes; a precept ſurely reaſonable; for how can that act be virtuous, which depends not upon our *own* choice, but upon that of *others*, and which we ſhould not have performed, if we had not expected that they would have applauded it?

Of

Of the ſame kind, though ſomewhat different in its immediate, and literal acception, is the inſtruction contained in the text, in which we are taught by St. Paul, that every man ought to give according to the purpoſe of his own heart, not grudgingly, or of neceſſity; by which it is commanded, that we ſhould, as our Saviour had already taught us, lay aſide, in the diſtribution of our alms, all regard to human authority; that we ſhould give according to the purpoſe of our own hearts, without reſpect to ſolicitation or influence; that we ſhould give, becauſe God has commanded, and give cheerfully, as a proof of ready and uncompelled obedience; obedience uncompelled by any other motive than a due ſenſe of our dependence upon the univerſal Lord, and the reaſonableneſs of obſerving the law of Him by whom we were created.

There are likewiſe other rules to be obſerved in the practice of Charity, which may be gathered, at leaſt conſequentially, from the Holy Scriptures; and which the common prudence of mankind at the ſame time evidently preſcribes. It is neceſſary that, in beſtowing our alms, we ſhould endeavour to promote the

the ſervice of God, and the general happineſs of ſociety, and, therefore, we ought not to give them, without enquiry into the ends for which they are deſired; we ought not to ſuffer our beneficence to be made inſtrumental to the encouragement of vice, or the ſupport of idleneſs; becauſe what is thus ſquandered may be wanted by others, who would uſe our kindneſs to better purpoſes, and who, without our aſſiſtance, would perhaps periſh.

Another precept, too often neglected, which yet a generous and elevated mind would naturally think highly neceſſary to be obſerved, is, that alms ſhould be given in ſuch a manner as may be moſt pleaſing to the perſon who receives them; that our Charity ſhould not be accompanied with inſults, nor followed by reproaches; that we ſhould, whenever it is poſſible, ſpare the wretched the unneceſſary, the mortifying pain of recounting their calamities, and repreſenting their diſtreſs; and when we have relieved them we ſhould never upbraid them with our kindneſs, nor recall their afflictions

to their minds by cruel and unſeaſonable admonitions to gratitude or induſtry. He only confers favours generouſly, who appears, when they are once conferred, to remember them no more.

Poverty is in itſelf ſufficiently afflictive, and to moſt minds the pain of wanting aſſiſtance is ſcarcely balanced by the pleaſure of receiving it. The end of Charity is to mitigate calamities; and he has little title to the reward of mercy, who afflicts with one hand, while he ſuccours with the other. But this fault, like many others, ariſes from pride, and from the deſire of temporal rewards. Men either forget the common nature of humanity, and therefore reproach others with thoſe misfortunes, to which they are themſelves equally ſubject; or they expect, from the gratitude, or applauſe, of thoſe whom they benefit, that reward which they are commanded to hope only from their Father which is in heaven.

Such are the rules of Charity, and ſuch the cautions required, to make our alms

pleaſing to him, in whoſe name they ought to be given; and, that they may be *now* given not *grudgingly*, or of *neceſſity*, but with that cheerfulneſs, which the Apoſtle recommends as neceſſary to draw down the love of God upon thoſe by whom they are beſtowed, let us conſider,

Thirdly, the reaſonableneſs of laying hold on the preſent opportunity for the exerciſe of our Charity.

It is juſt that we ſhould conſider every opportunity of performing a good action as the gift of God, one of the chief gifts which God beſtows upon man, in his preſent ſtate, and endeavour to improve the bleſſing, that it may not be withdrawn from us, as a talent unemployed; for it is not certain, that he, who neglects this call to his duty, will be permitted to live, till he hears another. It is likewiſe reaſonable to ſeize this opportunity, becauſe perhaps none can be afforded of more uſeful or beneficial Charity, none in which all the various purpoſes of Charity are more compendiouſly united.

It cannot be ſaid, that, by this Charity, idleneſs is encouraged; for thoſe who are to be benefited by it are at preſent incapable of labour, but hereafter deſigned for it. Nor can it be ſaid, that vice is countenanced by it, for many of them cannot yet be vicious. Thoſe who now give, cannot beſtow their alms for the pleaſure of hearing their Charity acknowledged, for they who ſhall receive it will not know their benefactors.

The immediate effect of alms given on this occaſion, is not only food to the hungry, and cloaths to the naked, and an habitation to the deſtitute, but what is of more *laſting* advantage, *inſtruction* to the *ignorant*.

He that *ſupports* an infant, enables him to live *here*; but he that *educates* him, aſſiſts him in his paſſage to an happier ſtate, and prevents that wickedneſs which is, if not the *neceſſary*, yet the *frequent conſequence* of unenlightened infancy and vagrant poverty.

Nor

Nor does this Charity terminate in the perſons upon whom it is conferred, but extends its influence through the whole ſtate, which has very frequently experienced, how much is to be dreaded from men, bred up without principles, and without employment. He who *begs* in the ſtreet, in his *infancy*, learns only how to *rob* there in his *manhood*; and it is certainly very apparent, with how much leſs difficulty evils are prevented, than remedied.

But though we ſhould ſuppoſe, what reaſon and experience ſufficiently diſprove, that poverty and ignorance were calamities to thoſe only on whom they fall, yet ſurely the ſenſe of their miſery might be ſufficient to awaken us to compaſſion. For who can hear the cries of a naked infant, without remembering that he was himſelf once equally naked, equally helpleſs? Who can ſee the diſorders of the ignorant, without remembering that he was born as ignorant as they? And who can forbear to reflect, that he ought to beſtow on

others thoſe benefits which he received himſelf? Who, that ſhall ſee piety and wiſdom promoted by his beneficence, can wiſh, that what he gave for ſuch uſes had been employed in any other manner? As the Apoſtle exhorts to hoſpitality, by obſerving that ſome have entertained *Angels* unawares, let us animate ourſelves to this Charity, by the hopes of educating *Saints*. Let us endeavour to reclaim vice, and to improve innocence to holineſs; and remember that the day is not far diſtant, in which our Saviour has promiſed to conſider our gift to theſe little ones as given to himſelf; and that *they who have turned many to righteouſneſs ſhall ſhine forth as the ſun, for ever and ever.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

2 PETER III. 3.

Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days Scoffers, walking after their own luſts.

A Very little acquaintance with human nature will inform us, that there are few men who can patiently bear the imputation of being in the wrong; and that there is no action, how unreaſonable or wicked ſoever it be, which thoſe, who are guilty of it, will not attempt to vindicate, though perhaps by ſuch a defence as aggravates the crime.

It is indeed common for men to conceal their faults, and gratify their paſſions in ſecret, and eſpecially, when they are firſt initiated in vice, to make uſe rather of artifice and diſſimulation, than audaciouſneſs and effrontery. But the arts of hypocriſy are, in time, exhauſted, and ſome unhappy circumſtance defeats thoſe meaſures which they had laid for preventing a diſcovery. They are at length ſuſpected, and by that curioſity which ſuſpicion always excites, cloſely purſued, and openly detected. It is then too late to think of deceiving mankind by falſe appearances, nor does any thing remain, but to avow boldly what can be no longer denied. Impudence is called in to the aſſiſtance of immorality; and the cenſures which cannot be eſcaped, muſt be openly defied. Wickedneſs is in itſelf timorous, and naturally ſkulks in coverts and in darkneſs, but grows furious by deſpair, and, when it can fly no farther, turns upon the purſuer.

Such

Such is the ſtate of a man abandoned to the indulgence of vicious inclinations. He juſtifies one crime by another; invents wicked principles to ſupport wicked practices; endeavours rather to corrupt others, than own himſelf corrupted, and, to avoid that ſhame which a confeſſion of his crimes would bring upon him, calls *evil good, and good evil, puts darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs.* He endeavours to trample upon thoſe laws which he is known not to obſerve, to ſcoff at thoſe truths which, if admitted, have an evident tendency to convict his whole behaviour of folly and abſurdity, and, from having long neglected to obey God, riſes at length into rebellion againſt him.

That no man ever became abandoned at once, is an old and common obſervation, which, like other aſſertions founded on experience, receives new confirmation by length of time. A man ventures upon wickedneſs, as upon waters with which he is unacquainted.

He looks upon them with horrour, and ſhudders at the thought of quitting the ſhore, and committing his life to the inconſtancy of the weather; but, by degrees, the ſcene grows familiar, his averſion abates, and is ſucceeded by curioſity. He launches out with fear and caution, always anxious and apprehenſive, leſt his veſſel ſhould be daſhed againſt a rock, ſucked-in by a quick-ſand, or hurried by the currents beyond ſight of ſhore. But his fears are daily leſſening, and the deep becomes leſs formidable. In time he loſes all ſenſe of danger, ventures out with full ſecurity, and roves without inclination to return: till he is driven into the boundleſs ocean, toſſed about by the tempeſts, and at laſt ſwallowed by the waves.

Moſt men have, or once had, an eſteem and reverence for virtue, and a contempt and abhorrence of vice; of which, whether they were impreſſed by nature, implanted by education, or deduced and ſettled by reaſon, it is at preſent of very little importance to enquire. Such theſe notions are, however they

were

were originally received, as reaſon cannot but adopt and ſtrengthen, and every man will freely confeſs that reaſon ought to be the rule of his conduct. Whoever therefore recedes, in his practice, from rules of which he allows the obligation, and ſuffers his paſſions to prevail over his opinions, feels at firſt a ſecret reluctance, is conſcious of ſome ſort of violence done to his intellectual powers; and though he will not deny himſelf that pleaſure which is preſent before him, or that ſingle gratification of his paſſions, he determines, or thinks he determines, that he will yield to no future temptation, that he will hereafter reject all the ſolicitation of his appetites, and live in ſuch a manner as he ſhould applaud in others, and as his own conſcience ſhould approve in himſelf.

Perhaps every man may recollect, that this was the temper of his mind, when he firſt permitted himſelf to deviate from the known paths of his duty, and that he never forſook them, in the early part of his life, without a deſign to return to them, and perſevere in them;

them; and that, when he was tempted another time, he complied, always with a tacit intention to add but this one more to his offences, and to ſpend the reſt of his life in penitence and obedience. Perhaps there are very many among the moſt profligate, who frequently ſtill their conſciences, and animate their hopes, with views of a reformation to be ſincerely entered upon in ſome diſtant period of their lives, who propoſe to dedicate, at leaſt, their laſt years to piety, and at ſome moments give way to wiſhes, that they may ſome time taſte the ſatisfaction of a good life, and *die the death of the righteous.*

But theſe, however given up to their deſires and paſſions, however ignorant of their own weakneſs, and preſumptuouſly confident of their natural powers, have not yet arrived at the ſummit of impiety, 'till they have learned, not only to neglect, but to inſult, religion, not only to be vicious, but to ſcoff at virtue.

This

This ſeems to be the laſt effect of a long continued habit of ſin, the ſtrongeſt evidence of a mind corrupted almoſt beyond hope of a recovery. Wickedneſs in this ſtate ſeems to have extended its power from the paſſions to the underſtanding. Not only the deſire of doing well is extinguiſhed, but the diſcernment of good and evil obliterated and deſtroyed. Such is the infatuation produced by a long courſe of obſtinate guilt.

Not only our ſpeculations influence our practice, but our practice reciprocally influences our ſpeculations. We not only do what we approve, but there is danger leſt in time we come to approve what we do, though for no other reaſon but that we do it. A man is always deſirous of being at peace with himſelf; and when he cannot reconcile his paſſions to his conſcience, he will attempt to reconcile his conſcience to his paſſions; he will find reaſon for doing what he is reſolved to do, and, rather than not *walk after his own luſts*, will ſcoff at religion.

Theſe Scoffers may be divided into two diſtinct claſſes, to be addreſſed in a very different manner: thoſe whom a conſtant proſecution of their luſts has deluded into a real diſbelief of religion, or diverted from a ſerious examination of it; and thoſe who are convinced of the truth of revelation, but affect to contemn and ridicule it from motives of intereſt or vanity.

I ſhall endeavour therefore to evince,

Firſt, The folly of ſcoffing at religion in thoſe who doubt the truth of it. And,

Secondly, The wickedneſs of this practice in thoſe who believe it.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to evince the folly of ſcoffing at religion in thoſe who doubt the truth of it.

Thoſe who in reality diſbelieve, or doubt of, religion, however negligent they may be in

in their enquiries after truth, generally profeſs the higheſt reverence for it, the ſincereſt deſire to diſcover it, and the ſtrongeſt reſolutions to adhere to it. They will frequently aſſert, and with good reaſon, that every man is valuable in proportion to his love of truth; that man enjoys the power of reaſon for this great end, that he may diſtinguiſh truth from falſehood; that not to ſearch for it is the moſt criminal lazineſs, and not to declare it, in oppoſition to the frowns of power, or the prejudices of ignorance, the moſt deſpicable cowardice.

When they declaim on this darling ſubject, they ſeldom fail to take the opportunity of throwing out keen invectives againſt bigotry; bigotry, that voluntary blindneſs, that ſlaviſh ſubmiſſion to the notions of others, which ſhackles the powers of the ſoul, and retards the progreſs of reaſon; that cloud, which intercepts our views, and throws a ſhade over the light of truth.

Such

Such is the diſcourſe of theſe men; and who, that hears it, would not expect from them the moſt diſintereſted impartiality, the moſt unwearied aſſiduity, and the moſt candid and ſober attention to any thing propoſed as an argument upon a ſubject worthy of their ſtudy? Who would not imagine that they made it the grand buſineſs of their lives to carry the art of reaſoning to its greateſt height, to enlighten the underſtanding of the ignorant by plain inſtructions enforced with ſolid arguments, and to eſtabliſh every important truth upon the moſt certain and unſhaken principles?

There ſeems to be nothing more inconſiſtent with ſo philoſophical a character than careleſs vivacity and airy levity. The talents which qualify a man for a diſputant and a buffoon ſeem very different; and an unprejudiced perſon would be inclined to form contrary ideas of an argument and a jeſt.

Study has been hitherto thought neceſſary to knowledge, and ſtudy cannot well be ſucceſsfully proſecuted without ſolitude and leiſure. It might therefore be conceived that this exalted ſect is above the low employments and empty amuſements of vulgar minds; that they avoid every thing which may interrupt their meditations, or perplex their ideas; and that, therefore, whoever ſtands in need of their inſtructions muſt ſeek them in privacies and retirements, in deſerts or in cells.

But theſe men have diſcovered, it ſeems, a more compendious way to knowledge. They decide the moſt momentous queſtions amidſt the jollity of feaſts, and the exceſſes of riot. They have found that an adverſary is more eaſily ſilenced than confuted. They inſult, inſtead of vanquiſhing, their antagoniſts, and decline the battle to haſten to the triumph.

It is an eſtabliſhed maxim among them, that he who ridicules an opinion confutes it.

For this reaſon they make no ſcruple of violating every rule of decency, and treating with the utmoſt contempt whatever is accounted venerable or ſacred.

For this conduct they admire themſelves, and go on applauding their own abilities, celebrating the victories they gain over their grave opponents, and loudly boaſting their ſuperiority to the advocates for Religion.

As humility is a very neceſſary qualification for an examiner into Religion, it may not be improper to depreſs the arrogance of theſe haughty champions, by ſhewing with how little juſtice they lay claim to victory, and how much leſs they deſerve to be applauded than deſpiſed.

There are two circumſtances which, either ſingle or united, make any attainments eſtimable among men. The firſt is the uſefulneſs of it to ſociety. The other is the capacity or application neceſſary for acquiring it.

If we conſider this art of ſcoffing with regard to either of theſe, we ſhall not find great reaſon to envy or admire it. It requires no depth of knowledge, or intenſeneſs of thought. Contracted notions, and ſuperficial views, are ſufficient for a man who is ambitious only of being the authour of a jeſt. That man may laugh who cannot reaſon; and he, that cannot comprehend a demonſtration, may turn the terms to ridicule.

This method of controverſy is indeed the general refuge of thoſe whoſe idleneſs or incapacity diſable them from producing any thing ſolid or convincing. They, who are certain of being confuted and expoſed in a ſober diſpute, imagine that by returning ſcurrility for reaſon, and by laughing moſt loudly, when they have leaſt to ſay, they ſhall ſhelter their ignorance from detection, and ſupply with impudence what they want in knowledge.

Nor will the poſſeſſors of this boaſted talent or ridicule appear more to deſerve reſpect on account of their uſefulneſs to mankind. Theſe gay ſallies of imagination, when confined to proper ſubjects, and reſtrained within the bounds of decency, are of no farther uſe to mankind than to divert, and can have no higher place in our eſteem than any other art that terminates in mere amuſement.

But when men treat ſerious matters ludicrouſly, when they ſtudy, not for truth, but for a jeſt, when they unite the moſt awful and moſt trifling ideas, only to tickle the imagination with the ſurprize of novelty, they no longer have the poor merit of diverting; they raiſe always either horrour or contempt, and hazard their higheſt intereſt, without even the low recompence of preſent applauſe.

That they hazard their higheſt intereſt can hardly be denied, when they determine, without the moſt ſcrupulous examination, thoſe

thoſe queſtions which relate to a future ſtate; and none certainly are leſs likely to diſcuſs theſe queſtions with the care which they require, than thoſe who accuſtom themſelves to continual levity.

The mind, long vitiated with trifles, and entertained with wild and unnatural combinations of ideas, becomes in a ſhort time unable to ſupport the fatigue of reaſoning; it is diſguſted with a long ſucceſſion of ſolemn images, and retires from ſerious meditation, and tireſome labour, to gayer fancies, and leſs difficult employments.

Beſides, he that has practiſed the art of ſilencing others with a jeſt, in time learns to ſatisfy himſelf in the ſame manner. It becomes unneceſſary to the tranquillity of his own mind to confute an objection; it is ſufficient for him if he can ridicule it.

Thus he ſoon grows indifferent to truth or falſehood, and almoſt incapable of diſcerning one from the other. He conſiders eternity it-

ſelf as a ſubject for mirth, and is equally ludicrous upon all occaſions.

What deluſion, what bigotry, is equal to this! Men neglect to ſearch after eternal happineſs for fear of being interrupted in their mirth. If others have been miſled, they have been miſled by their reverence for great authorities, or by ſtrong prejudices of education. Such errours may be extenuated, and perhaps excuſed. They have at leaſt ſomething plauſible to plead, and their aſſertors act with ſome ſhow of reaſon. But what can the moſt extenſive charity alledge in favour of thoſe men who, if they periſh everlaſtingly, periſh by their attachment to merriment, and their confidence in a jeſt?

It is aſtoniſhing that any man can forbear enquiring ſeriouſly, whether there is a God; whether God is juſt; whether this life is the only ſtate of exiſtence; whether God has appointed rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate; whether he has given any laws for the regulation of our conduct here; whether he has

has given them by revelation; and whether the religion publickly taught carries any mark of divine appointment. Theſe are queſtions which every reaſonable Being ought undoubtedly to conſider with an attention ſuitable to their importance; and he, whom the conſideration of eternal happineſs or miſery cannot awaken from his pleaſing dreams, cannot prevail upon to ſuſpend his mirth, ſurely ought not to deſpiſe others for dulneſs and ſtupidity.

Let it be remembered, that the nature of things is not alterable by our conduct. We cannot make truth; it is our buſineſs only to find it. No propoſition can become more or leſs certain or important, by being conſidered or neglected. It is to no purpoſe to wiſh, or to ſuppoſe, that to be falſe which is in itſelf true, and therefore to acquieſce in our own wiſhes and ſuppoſitions, when the matter is of eternal conſequence, to believe obſtinately without grounds of belief, and to determine without examination, is the laſt degree of folly and abſurdity. It is not impoſſible that

he who acts in this manner may obtain the approbation of madmen like himself, but he will incur the contempt of every wise man; and, what is more to be feared, amidst his security and supineness, his sallies and his flights, *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh him to scorn; the Lord shall have him in derision.*

Thus have I endeavoured to give a faint idea of the folly of those who scoff at Religion, because they disbelieve, and, by scoffing, harden themselves in their disbelief. But I shall be yet more unable to describe, in a proper manner, what I am to mention in the second place,

The wickedness of those that believe Religion, and yet deride it from motives of interest or vanity.

This is a degree of guilt against which it might seem, at the first view, superfluous to preach, because it might be thought impossible that it should ever be committed; as, in ancient

ancient ſtate, no puniſhment was decreed for the murderer of his father, becauſe it was imagined to be a crime not incident to human nature. But experience taught them, and teaches us, that wickedneſs may ſwell beyond imagination. and that there are no limits to the madneſs of impiety.

For a man to revile and inſult that God whoſe power he allows, to ridicule that revelation of which he believes the authority divine, to dare the vengeance of omnipotence, and cry, *am not I in ſport!* is an infatuation incredible, a degree of madneſs without a name. Yet there are men who, by walking after their own luſts, and indulging their paſſions, have reached this ſtupendous height of wickedneſs. They have dared to teach falſehoods which they do not themſelves believe; and to extinguiſh in others that conviction which they cannot ſuppreſs in themſelves.

The motive of their proceeding is ſometimes a deſire of promoting their own pleaſures, by procuring accomplices in vice. Man

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is ſo far formed for ſociety, that even ſolitary wickedneſs quickly diſguſts; and debauchery requires its combinations and confederacies, which, as intemperance diminiſhes their numbers, muſt be filled up with new Proſelytes.

Let thoſe who practiſe this dreadful method of depraving the morals, and enſnaring the ſoul, conſider what they are engaged in! Let them conſider what they are promoting, and what means they are employing! Let them pauſe, and reflect a little, before they do an injury that can never be repaired, before they take away what cannot be reſtored; before they corrupt the heart of their companion by perverting his opinions, before they lead him into ſin, and by deſtroying his reverence for Religion, take away every motive to repentance, and all the means of reformation!

This is a degree of guilt, before which robbery, perjury, and murder, vaniſh into nothing. No miſchief, of which the conſequences terminate in our preſent ſtate, bears any proportion to the crime of decoying our brother

brother into the broad way of eternal miſery, and ſtopping his ears againſt that holy voice that recalls him to ſalvation.

What muſt be the anguiſh of ſuch a man, when he becomes ſenſible of his own crimes! How will he bear the thought of having promoted the damnation of multitudes by the propagation of known deluſions! What laſting contrition, what ſevere repentance, muſt be neceſſary for ſuch deep and ſuch accumulated guilt! Surely if blood be required for blood, a ſoul ſhall be required for a ſoul.

There are others who deride Religion for the ſake of diſplaying their own imaginations, of following the faſhion of a corrupt and licentious age, or gaining the friendſhip of the great, or the applauſe of the gay. How mean muſt that wretch be who can be overcome by ſuch temptations as theſe! Yet there are men who ſell that ſoul which God has formed for infinite felicity, defeat the great work of their redemption, and plunge into thoſe pains which ſhall never end, leſt they ſhould loſe the patronage of villains, and the praiſe of fools.

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I ſuppoſe thoſe, whom I am now ſpeaking of, to be in themſelves ſufficiently convinced of the truth of the Scriptures, and may therefore, very properly, lay before them the threatnings denounced by God againſt their conduct.

It may be uſeful to them to reflect betimes on the danger of *fearing man rather than God*; to conſider that it ſhall avail a man nothing, if he *gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul*; and that whoever *ſhall be aſhamed of his Saviour before men, of him will his Saviour be aſhamed before his Father which is in heaven.*

That none of us may be in the number of thoſe unhappy perſons who thus ſcoff at the means of grace, and relinquiſh the hope of glory, may God, of his infinite mercy, grant, through the merits of that Saviour who hath brought life and immortality to light!

SER.

SERMON VIII.

PSALM CXLV. 9.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

IN this devout, maſterly, and uſeful performance, the Authour appears deeply ſenſible of the divine greatneſs, and peculiarly tranſported with contemplating GOD's infinite goodneſs; even to that degree, that he cheerfully engages in, and abſolutely devotes himſelf to, the very important ſervice of adoring and obeying this Almighty, Unbounded, and moſt Benevolent Being.

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This his religion, as he intimates, was founded upon the moſt ſolid ground of reaſon; for as the great Father and Lord of all is certainly matchleſs, and unrivalled in majeſty and in power, ſo is he diſintereſted, wonderful, and glorious, in bounty and compaſſion; averſe and ſlow to anger, but ready to receive, to favour and reward, all who diligently ſeek, and faithfully ſerve him. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, I ſhall conſider,

Firſt, Some arguments that ſupport, or prove it.

Secondly, Illuſtrate its extenſive ſignification and import in ſome remarkable inſtances, and conclude with a practical application.

Firſt, I am to conſider ſome arguments that eſtabliſh this ſentiment.

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Our great Lord and Maſter has taught us, that there is none good but one, that is God. By which expreſſion we may underſtand, that there is none ſo perfectly diſintereſted, ſo diffuſively, and ſo aſtoniſhingly good as God is. For, in another place, he inſtructs us both how to comprehend, and rely on, this unchangeable and never-failing attribute of the divine nature; reſembling it to, or repreſenting it by, an human quality or virtue, namely, the affection and tender regard of parents to their children. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your Father, which is in Heaven, give good things to them that aſk him?* From whence it is obvious to remark, that as the humane and generous man has a peculiar tenderneſs for his more immediate deſcendants, and, proportionally to his power and influence, is willing and active to ſuccour and relieve the indigent, to divide care, leſſen miſery, and diffuſe happineſs through the world; inconceivably more affectionate is the eternal Parent unto, and regardful of,

all his intelligent creatures, truly diſpoſed, according to their rank of exiſtence, to promote their welfare; and beyond comprehenſion inclined to conduct them, through the greateſt variety of circumſtances, to the nobleſt perfection, and the higheſt degree of felicity. In his righteous and benevolent nature there cannot poſſibly be the moſt diſtant tendency to caprice, ſeverity, or ſelfiſhneſs; for the multitude of ſharers, he knows, can never ſubtract from his inexhauſtible fulneſs. He created to communicate. In every evil which he prevents, he is pleaſed, and in all the good that he beſtows, he glories. His goodneſs dictated the beſtowing of exiſtence, in all its forms, and with all its properties. His goodneſs diſplays itſelf in ſuſtaining and diſpoſing of all things. His goodneſs connects unnumbered worlds together, in one ſpacious, vaſt, and unbounded univerſe, and embraces every ſyſtem. *His tender mercies are over all his works.*

Without goodneſs, what apprehenſions could we entertain of all the other attributes

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of the Divine Being? Without the utmoſt extent of benevolence and mercy, they would hardly be perfections, or excellencies. And what would an univerſal adminiſtration produce, in the hands of an evil, or a partial, or malevolent direction, but ſcenes of horror and devaſtation? Not affliction and puniſhment for the ſake of diſcipline and correction, to prevent the offence, or reform the ſinner; but heavy judgements and dreadful vengeance, to deſtroy him; or implacable wrath and fiery indignation, to prolong his miſery, and extend the duration of his torture through the revolving periods of and endleſs eternity.

Without the moſt enlarged notions of an infinite and everlaſting goodneſs in the divine nature, an impenetrable gloom muſt hang over every mind, and darkneſs over-ſpread the whole face of being. Neither could any other conceivable ſentiment diſperſe our ſuſpicions, or baniſh one of our guilty, or ſuperſtitious fears. For ſuppoſe he confined his goodneſs to a few, without any reaſonable cauſe or juſt ground, and we could be ſo

whimſically partial to ourſelves, as to conceit that we were of this ſelect number; yet there could be no ſecurity of happineſs, not even to this little flock. He that choſe them by chance, might as accidentally abandon them; and, as the former was without reaſon or goodneſs, the latter might be without righteouſneſs or mercy. Therefore it is infinitely deſirable to think, and we are confident of the truth of our idea, that *the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

For if he be ſelf-exiſtent, omnipotent, and poſſeſſed of perfect liberty; if it be impoſſible for him ever to err, or miſtake, in what is good and fitting, and if he enjoys an infinite ability to effect, with a thought only, what ſhall always be for the greateſt advantage, he muſt be originally and eſſentially, immutably and for ever good.

Holy Scripture, as if beauty and goodneſs were ſynonymous terms, or inſeparable qualities, thus deſcribes him; *How great is thy goodneſs! And let the beauty of the Lord our God*

God be upon us. And, as if glory and goodneſs ſignified the ſame thing, you find Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19, *And he ſaid, I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory.* To which the anſwer is, *I will make all my goodneſs paſs before thee.* And when, as it is written in the next chapter, the Lord deſcended, and proclaimed his name, or publiſhed the attributes in which he is peculiarly delighted, what is this diſtinguiſhing name, or what theſe divine and glorious attributes? *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin.* The Apoſtle ſums up all theſe in one word, when he ſaith, *God is love.* Which leads me to the ſecond thing propoſed,

Namely, to illuſtrate the extenſive ſignification and import of this ſubject by ſome remarkable inſtances. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

No bounds can be fixed to the divine preſence, nor is any part of illimitable ſpace with-

out his inſpection, and active influence. There is nothing remote, or obſcure to him, nor any exceptions to his favour among all the works of his hands. Far and wide then as is the vaſt range of exiſtence, ſo is the divine benevolence extended; and both in the previous trial, and final retribution, of all his rational and moral productions, *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

In the firſt place, to illuſtrate this, we need only to take a tranſient view of the outworks of the viſible creation, a general ſurvey of the nature and correſpondence of the various parts of this regular and grand machine, this finiſhed and ſtupendous fabrick, in which every thing is contrived and concluded for the beſt.

For do but imagine an appetite, or faculty, altered; or a change in the object prepared to gratify it, in any reſpect. Suppoſe a material alteration, or conſiderable difference in nature, and we ſhall eaſily perceive, it would be a manifold diſadvantage, either to individuals,

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or to the whole. Suppoſe the earth otherwiſe than it is, or the atmoſphere and ſurrounding air to be varied, and in any degree more rarefied or more condenſed; ſuppoſe the element of water greatly increaſed, or conſiderably diminiſhed; or the Sun's blazing orb fixed nearer, and its vertical beams therefore ſtronger, or ſuppoſe it more remote, and its heat ſenſibly abated, the alteration would be a misfortune, if the difference did not terminate in miſery and deſtruction. So that from the preſent adjuſtment, proportion, and accommodation of all matters in the wide creation, the conſequence is fairly drawn, and very evident, that *God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

This is certain of the *whole* of God's works, and is peculiarly apparent in *man*, the principal inhabitant of this earth. For, as his welfare, dignity, and ſatisfaction, nay his happineſs, and even the end of his being, depend on, and ariſe from, his regularity and conſtancy in virtue, what an infinite concern hath the Deity expreſſed about it? What, that can

conſiſt with liberty, hath been omitted by ſupreme wiſdom, in this moſt important affair? To incline him to be moderate in all his gratifications, true pleaſure proceeds from nothing elſe. To keep off intemperate indulgence, and to guard him againſt all voluptuous exceſſes, it is ſo ordained, that extravagance and inconvenience are near together, and that vice and pain are, though not immediate and inſeparable aſſociates, never far aſunder; and that it is impoſſible for that ſoul to be calm and at eaſe, which iniquity has ſtained, and which impenitent guilt corrodes.

The parts of man's body are wonderfully deſigned, and curiouſly conſtructed; regularly diſpoſed of, and moſt accurately proportioned for the ſafety and advantage of the whole. As apt as we may be to quarrel with our nature, ſuppoſe an inſtinct was ſtruck out of our frame, or a ſingle paſſion taken from us; ſuppoſe our ſenſes any ways altered, by being either ſtrengthened, or impaired; or even reaſon refined and abſtracted to ſuch a degree as to render us wholly negligent of food and raiment,

ment, neceſſary exerciſes, and ſecular concerns; in any of theſe inſtances, the imaginary emendation would be a real deficiency, and a proportionable deduction from the moment and quantity of our happineſs.

It is evidently the ſame with reſpect to all the other creatures we are acquainted with. Their nature and condition, their qualities and circumſtances, are ſo adapted to one another, that, as the intellectual powers of a being of a more exalted nature would not probably ſuit an inhabitant of this lower world, ſo neither would the capacities of human nature guide the fowls of the air, or conduct the beaſts of the field, to ſo much happineſs, as they find, by following the motions and impulſes of ſenſe and inſtinct. And if reflection, enlarged ideas, and moral diſcrimination, be denied them, it is plainly becauſe they would be a burthen and a misfortune, rather than a benefit to them.

But theſe univerſal notices, and undeniable teſtimonies of divine goodneſs, throughout

the animated regions of earth, ſea, and air, in the propriety and ſuitableneſs of creatures to their ſtate, and objects to their appetites, are too evident and obvious to all men to need enlargement. God's works are all wonderful; and in wiſdom, and with goodneſs, hath he made them.

Secondly, This attribute is likewiſe illuſtriouſly diſplayed in the divine providence and government of the creation, though our faculties are too limited and ſcanty, and our views too narrow and imperfect, to trace its ſecret and myſterious ways.

An omnipotent ſupport, and a perfectly wiſe direction, are evident in the laws eſtabliſhed, and regularly obſerved through all the divine productions in heaven above, or on the earth beneath. Neither have the moſt celebrated Philoſophers been able, with all their boaſted ſagacity, and after all their laborious reſearches into the volume of nature, to aſſign any other cauſe, but an inviſible agency, and an immediate energy of Providence, for mutual

tual attraction in bodies, and the determination of all portions of matter to their center; for the great ſtrength of appetite, inſtinct, and ſagacity, in animals; that the prevalence and continuance thereof ſhould be ſo preciſely and exactly commenſurate to the occaſions which require them, and that they ſhould be no longer urgent, than for the time neceſſary, as in the affection for their young. All which do greatly illuſtrate the wiſdom and goodneſs of God's adminiſtration, and ſuperintending care.

Holy writ elegantly and emphatically deſcribes the excellence of goodneſs in the divine Providence, in various places, particularly in this Pſalm, of which my text is a part. *The eyes of all wait upon thee: thou giveſt them their meat in due ſeaſon. Thou openeſt thine hand, and ſatisfieſt the deſires of every living thing. Behold* (ſaith our bleſſed Saviour) *the fowls of the air, for they ſow not, neither do the reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Conſider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither*

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do they ſpin; and yet I ſay unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of theſe. Not one individual can be ſo minute and inconſiderable as to eſcape the notice of Heaven's all-ſurveying eye; nor one ſo importantly large, and ſeemingly ſelf-ſufficient, as to ſubſiſt a moment without the divine ſupport. By him all things conſiſt: *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

But Man appears the diſtinguiſhed charge of the beneficent Creatour; and unleſs Providence had connected rational beings by the peculiar ſtrong ties of mutual obligation, perpetual dependency, and inſeparable intereſt, they would, of all creatures, be the moſt deſtitute and miſerable; for there is not one that in the firſt ſtages of its exiſtence is ſo totally helpleſs, and abſolutely inſufficient for its own preſervation, ſupport, or defence, as man. Therefore parental tenderneſs is both early and paſſionate, permanent and laſting. Our ſocial diſpoſitions and affections are enlarged to the utmoſt limits, and continue with

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us in the concluding decays, and laſt end of this mortal life; that we may always love one another, and glorify *the Lord who is good to all, and whoſe tender mercies are over all his works.*

The conſequences, in the laſt place, which reſult from the arguments you have heard, are ſo obvious, that I make no doubt but your own thoughts have already anticipated them. Ingratitude among men hath, in every age, and in every region of the earth, been an object of general deteſtation, and univerſally accounted a glaring indication of depravity of heart. If the caſe ſtand thus among mortals, whoſe common intereſts require a reciprocation of kindneſs and beneficence, how greatly is the crime aggravated, when it is committed againſt that Being, whoſe goodneſs towards the ſons of men is perfectly diſintereſted! The exertions of divine Providence in our behalf tend ſolely to our own welfare; nor can any thing we do in return contribute, in the ſmalleſt degree, to the augmentation of the happineſs of the Almighty Benefactor. This unqueſtionably

queſtionably ought to be ſufficient to exact from us the moſt profound veneration, the moſt fervent gratitude, an implicit obedience to his ſacred laws.

David, after having enumerated the tender mercies of God, is penetrated with the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of devotion. *My mouth* (he exclaims) *ſhall ſpeak the praiſe of the Lord; and let all fleſh bleſs his holy name for ever and ever.* Such was the tribute which the royal Pſalmiſt thought due to the Deity for the creation and preſervation of man. The debt is accumulated to us in an infinite proportion; for while we are bounden to the ſame return for the ſame benefits voluntarily conferred upon us, a grander obligation is ſuperadded to that for the *means of grace*, and for *the hope of glory*. Were the mercies of the Lord limited to the tenure of our preſent exiſtence, great and glorious as they are, the human mind would be clouded by the conſciouſneſs that a very few years muſt exclude us for ever from the participation of them. But ſince the gracious

rays of life and immortality have diſſipated the gloom that hung upon futurity, ſince, by the propitiatory ſacrifice of the Son of God, death is diſarmed of his ſting, and the grave deprived of its victory, divine goodneſs hath received its perfect conſummation.

If gratitude, praiſe, and adoration, therefore, be due to the Authour of our being for thoſe bleſſings which we enjoy at preſent, it is no leſs our higheſt intereſt ſo to uſe them in this previous ſtate of trial, that we may finally exchange them for thoſe purer and incorruptible treaſures reſerved for the righteous in the kingdom of heaven.

Which that we may all do, may that God who created and preſerves us grant, through the merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt!

SERMON IX.

1 CORINTHIANS XI. 29.

He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf.

THE celebration of the Sacrament is generally acknowledged, by the Chriſtian Church, to be the higheſt act of devotion, and the moſt ſolemn part of poſitive religion, and has therefore moſt engaged the attention of thoſe, who either profeſs to teach the way to happineſs, or endeavour to learn it, and, like all other ſubjects, frequently diſcuſſed by men of various intereſts, diſpoſitions, and capacities, has given riſe to various opinions, widely different from each other.

Such is the weakneſs of mankind, that one errour, whether admitted, or detected, is very often the cauſe of another. Thoſe who reject any opinion, however juſtly, are commonly incited by their zeal to condemn every poſition, in which they diſcover any affinity with the tenets which they oppoſe, of which they have been long accuſtomed to ſhew the falſehood and the danger, and therefore imagine themſelves nearer to truth and ſafety, in proportion as they recede from them. For this reaſon it ſometimes happens that in paſſionate conteſts, and diſputations long continued, each controvertiſt ſucceeds in the confutation of his adverſary's poſitions, and each fails in the eſtabliſhment of his own.

In this manner have writers, of different perſuaſions, treated on the worthineſs required of thoſe who partake of the Lord's Supper; a quality, not only neceſſary to procure the favour of God, and to give efficacy to the inſtitution, but ſo ſtrictly enjoined in the words of the text, that to approach the holy

holy table without it, is to pervert the means of ſalvation, and to turn prayer into ſin.

The ardour and vehemence with which thoſe are condemned, who eat and drink unworthily, have filled the melancholy, the timorous, and the humble, with unneceſſary terrours, which have been ſometimes ſo much increaſed by the injudicious zeal of writers, erroneouſly pious, that they have conceived the danger of attempting to obey this precept of our Saviour more formidable than that of neglecting it, and have ſpent the greateſt part of their lives in the omiſſion of a duty of the higheſt importance; or, being equally terrified on either hand, have lived in anguiſh and perplexity, under a conſtant ſenſe of the neceſſity of doing what they cannot, in their opinion, do in an acceptable manner, and which of courſe they ſhall either do, or omit, at the utmoſt hazard of eternal happineſs.

Such exalted piety, ſuch unſhaken virtue, ſuch an uniform ardour of divine affections,

and ſuch a conſtant practice of religious duties, have been repreſented as ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary to a worthy reception of this ſacrament, as few men have been able to diſcover in thoſe whom they moſt eſteem for their purity of life, and which no man's conſcience will perhaps ſuffer him to find in himſelf, and therefore thoſe who know themſelves not to have arrived at ſuch elevated excellence, who ſtruggle with paſſions which they cannot wholly conquer, and bewail infirmities, which yet they perceive to adhere to them, are frighted from an act of devotion, of which they have been taught to believe, that it is ſo ſcarcely to be performed worthily by an embodied ſpirit, that it requires the holineſs of angels, and the uncontaminated raptures of Paradiſe.

Thus it appeared, that, inſtead of being excited to ardent deſires of perfection, and unwearied endeavours after the utmoſt height of ſanctity, not only the ſenſual and the profligate were hardened in their wickedneſs, by conceiving a life of piety too hard to be borne,

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but the diffident and ſcrupulous were terrified into deſpair, conſidered vigilance and caution as unavailing fatigues, remitted their ardour, relaxed their diligence, and ceaſed to purſue what they could no longer hope to attain.

To remove theſe doubts, and diſperſe theſe apprehenſions, doctrines of very different tendency have been induſtriouſly promoted; lower degrees of piety have been declared ſufficient, and the dangers of reception have been extenuated; nor have any arts of interpretation been untried, or any conjecture, which ſagacity or learning could produce, been forgotten, to aſſign to the words of the text a ſenſe leſs to be dreaded by the unworthy communicant. But by theſe opinions, imprudently inculcated, many have been miſled to conſider the Sacrament, as little more than a curſory act of devotion; the exhortations of the Apoſtle have loſt their efficacy, and the terrours of the Lord, with which he enforces them, have no longer repreſſed the licentiouſneſs of the profligate, or diſturbed the indolence of the ſupine.

Religion has ſunk into ceremony; God has, without fear, been approached with the lips, when the heart has been far from him; and the Supper of the Lord has been frequented by thoſe, of whom it could not be perceived, that they were very ſolicitous to avoid the guilt of unworthy communication.

Thus have different interpretations of the ſame text produced errours equally dangerous, and which might have been equally obviated, by a careful attention to the nature and inſtitution of the Sacrament, an unprejudiced examination of the poſition of the Apoſtle, and the compariſon of this paſſage with other comminations; methods of enquiry, which, in the explication of doubtful texts of ſcripture, ought always to be obſerved, and by which it may be proved, to the comfort of the depreſſed, and the confirmation of the doubtful, that the ſin of unworthy reception, though great, is yet to be pardoned; and to the reſtraint of the preſumptuous, and confuſion of the profane, that the preparation required is ſtrict, though practicable, and the

denunciation ſuch as ought to terrify the negligent, though not diſcourage the pious.

When eternal puniſhments are denounced againſt any crime, it is always evidently the intention of the writer to declare and enforce to thoſe, that are yet innocent, the duty of avoiding them, and to thoſe who have already committed them, the neceſſity of repentance, reformation, and future caution. For it is not the will of God, that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould repent, and be ſaved. It is not by one act of wickedneſs, that infinite mercy will be kindled to everlaſting anger, and the beneficent Father of the univerſe for ever alienated from his creatures; but by a long courſe of crimes, deliberately committed againſt the convictions of conſcience, and the admonitions of grace; by a life ſpent in guilt, and concluded without repentance. *No drunkard or extortioner*, ſays the Apoſtle, *ſhall inherit eternal life*. Yet ſhall no man be excluded from future happineſs, by a ſingle inſtance, or even by long habits, of intemperance, or extortion. Repentance and new life

will efface his crimes, reinſtate him in the favour of his judge, reſtore him to thoſe promiſes which he has forfeited, and open the paths to eternal happineſs.

Such is the crime of unworthy reception of the Holy Sacrament, by which *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf*; to which no man can come unprepared, or partake of, if he is diveſted of the intentions, ſuitable to ſo ſolemn a part of divine worſhip, without adding to the number of his ſins, and, by a neceſſary conſequence, to the danger of his ſoul. But though the ſoul is, by ſuch an act of wickedneſs, endangered, it is not neceſſarily deſtroyed, or irreverſibly condemned. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, contributes indeed, by eating and drinking, to his own damnation, as he that engages in fraudulent, or unlawful commerce, may be ſaid, with great propriety, to traffic for damnation, or to ſet his ſoul to ſale; yet as it is certain, that fraud is not unpardonable, if it ſhall afterwards give way to juſtice, ſo neither is the profanation of the

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Sacrament a crime, which the goodneſs of God cannot forgive, if it be ſucceeded by true devotion. The whole life of man is a ſtate of probation; he is always in danger, and may be always in hope. As no ſhort fervours of piety, not particular acts of beneficence, however exalted, can ſecure him from the poſſibility of ſinking into wickedneſs, ſo no neglect of devotion, nor the commiſſion of any crimes, can preclude the means of grace, or the hope of glory. He that has eaten and drank unworthily may enter into ſalvation, by repentance and amendment; as he that has eaten and drank worthily may, by negligence or preſumption, periſh everlaſtingly.

This account of the guilt of unworthy reception makes it neceſſary to enquire, whether by the original word in the text be meant, as it is tranſlated, *damnation*, the eternal puniſhments of a future ſtate; or, as it is more frequently interpreted, condemnation, temporary judgements, or worldly afflictions. For, from either ſenſe, the enormity of the crime, and the anger of God enkindled by it, is ſufficiently apparent. Every act of wicked-

neſs that is puniſhed with immediate vengeance, will, if it be aggravated by repetitions, or not expiated by repentance, incur *final* condemnation; for temporal puniſhments are the merciful admonitions of God, to avoid, by a timely change of conduct, that ſtate in which there is no repentance, and thoſe pains which can have no end. So that the confident and preſumptuous, though it ſhould be allowed that only temporal puniſhments are threatened in the text, are to remember, that, without reformation, they will be only aggravations of the crime, and that at the laſt day, thoſe who could not be awakened to a juſt reverence of this divine inſtitution, will be deprived of the benefits of that death, of which it was eſtabliſhed as a perpetual commemoration. And thoſe who are depreſſed by unneceſſary terrours, may repel any temptations to deſpondency, by conſidering, that the crime of unworthy communication is like all others, only unpardoned, where it is unrepented.

Having thus ſhewn the danger incurred by an unworthy reception of the Sacrament, it

is neceſſary to enquire how it may be avoided, and to conſider,

Firſt, What it is to eat and drink unworthily.

Secondly, By what means a man may become a worthy partaker of the Lord's Supper.

Firſt, I am to conſider what it is to eat and drink unworthily.

The unworthineſs with which the Corinthians are upbraided by the Apoſtle, was, in part, ſuch, as the preſent regulated eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, and the aſſiſtance which religion receives from the civil power, make it unneceſſary to cenſure, ſince it is not now committed even by the moſt preſumptuous, negligent, or profane. It was a practice amongſt them to aſſemble at the Holy Table in a tumultuous manner, and to celebrate the Euchariſt with indecency and riot. But though ſuch open profanation of this ſacred ordinance is not now to be apprehended, and, therefore,

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no man needs to be cautioned againſt it, yet the cauſe which produced it is ſuch, as we cannot too anxiouſly fear, or too diligently avoid; for its influences are various and extenſive, and often weaken the efficacy of the Sacrament, though they produce no apparent diſorders in the celebration of it.

The Corinthians fell into this enormous ſin, ſays the Apoſtle, *not diſcerning the Lord's Body*, for want of diſcerning the importance and ſanctity of the inſtitution, and of diſtinguiſhing the Lord's Body, from the common elements of bread and wine, exhibited on common occaſions of feſtive jollity. It is therefore the firſt duty of every Chriſtian to diſcern the Lord's Body, or to impreſs upon his mind a juſt idea of this act of commemoration, of the commands by which it is enforced, of the great ſacrifice which it repreſents, and of the benefits which it produces. Without theſe reflections, often repeated, and made habitual by long and fervent meditation, every one will be in danger of *eating and drinking unworthily*, of receiving the Sacra-

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ment without ſufficient veneration, without that ardent gratitude for the death of Chriſt, and that ſteady confidence in his merits, by which the Sacrament is made efficacious to his ſalvation; for of what uſe can it be to commemorate the death of the Redeemer of mankind without faith, and without thankfulneſs? Such a celebration of the Sacrament is nothing leſs than a mockery of God, an act by which we *approach him with our lips, when our hearts are far from him*; and as ſuch inſincerity and negligence cannot but be, in a very high degree, criminal, as he that eateth and drinketh thus unworthily cannot but promote his own damnation, it is neceſſary to enquire,

Secondly, By what means a man may become a worthy partaker of the Lord's Supper.

The method by which we are directed by the Apoſtle to prepare ourſelves for the Sacrament, is that of ſelf-examination, which implies a careful regulation of our lives by the rules of the Goſpel; for to what purpoſe is our

our conduct to be examined, but that it may be amended, where it appears erroneous and defective? The duty of examination therefore is only mentioned, and repentance and reformation are ſuppoſed, with great reaſon, inſeparable from it; for nothing is more evident, than that we are to enquire into the ſtate of our ſouls, as into affairs of leſs importance, with a view to avoid danger, or to ſecure happineſs. When we enquire with regard to our faith, whether it be ſufficiently vigorous or powerful, whether it regularly influences our conduct, reſtrains our paſſions, and moderates our deſires, what is intended by this duty, but that if we find ourſelves Chriſtians only in name, if we diſcover that the example of our divine Maſter has little force upon our conſtant converſation, and that God is ſeldom in our thoughts, except in the ſolemn acts of ſtated worſhip, we muſt then endeavour to invigorate our faith by returning frequently to meditate upon the objects of it, our creation, our redemption, the means of grace, and the hope of glory; and to enlighten

lighten our underſtandings, and awaken our affections, by the peruſal of writings of piety, and, above all, of the Holy Scriptures.

If any man, in his examination of his life, diſcovers that he has been guilty of fraud, extortion, or injury to his neighbour, he is to make reparation to his utmoſt power. If he finds malice or hatred lurking in his mind, he muſt expel them by a ſtrong reſolution never to comply with their motions, or ſuffer them to break out in any real act of revenge. If he obſerves that he is often betrayed, by paſſions, or appetites, into unlawful methods of gratifying them, he muſt reſolve to reſtrain them for the future, by watching and faſting, by a ſteady temperance and perpetual vigilance.

But let him beware of vain confidence in his own firmneſs, and implore, by fervent and ſincere prayer, the co operation of God's grace with his endeavours; for by grace alone can

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we hope to reſiſt the numberleſs temptations that perpetually ſurround us; by grace only can we reject the ſolicitations of pleaſure, repreſs the motions of anger, and turn away from the allurements of ambition. And this grace, when ſincerely implored, is always granted in a degree ſufficient for our ſalvation; and it ought, therefore, to be one of the firſt parts of our preparation for the Sacrament, to pray for that grace, without which our examination itſelf will be uſeleſs, becauſe, without it, no pious reſolution can be formed, nor any virtue be practiſed.

As, therefore, it is only by an habitual and unrepented unworthineſs that damnation is incurred, let no man be harraſſed with deſpondency for any paſt irreverence or coldneſs! As the Sacrament was inſtituted for one of the means of grace, let no one, who ſincerely deſires the ſalvation of his own ſoul, neglect to receive it; and as eternal puniſhment is denounced by the Apoſtle againſt all thoſe who receive it unworthily, let no man approach the

the Table of the Lord, without repentance of his former ſins, ſteadfaſt purpoſes of a new life, and full confidence in his merits, whoſe death is repreſented by it.

SERMON

SERMON X.

(Preached on the 30th of January).

JAMES III. 16.

Where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion.

THAT the life of man is unhappy, that his days are not only few, but evil, that he is ſurrounded by dangers, diſtracted by uncertainties, and oppreſſed by calamities, requires no proof. This is a truth, which every man confeſſes, or which he, that denies it, denies againſt conviction. Accordingly we find the miſeries of our preſent ſtate lamented by Writers of every claſs, from the inſpired Teachers of Religion, who admoniſh us of our frailty and infelicity, that they may incite us

to labour after a better ſtate, where *there is fulneſs of joy, and pleaſures for evermore*, to the vaineſt and looſeſt Authour, whoſe deſign is to teach methods, not of improving, but of waſting time, and whoſe doctrine St. Paul, ſpeaking in a borrowed character, has well expreſſed in one ſhort ſentence, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*

When ſuch is the condition of beings, not brute and ſavage, but endowed with reaſon, and united in ſociety, who would not expect that they ſhould join in a perpetual confederacy againſt the certain, or fortuitous, troubles to which they are expoſed? that they ſhould univerſally co-operate in the promotion of univerſal felicity? that every man ſhould eaſily diſcover that his own happineſs is connected with that of every other man? that thouſands and millions ſhould continue together, as partakers of one common nature? and that every eye ſhould be vigilant, and every hand active, for the confirmation of eaſe, and the prevention of misfortune?

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This expectation might be formed by ſpeculative wiſdom, but experience will ſoon diſſipate the pleaſing illuſion. A ſlight ſurvey of life will ſhew that, inſtead of hoping to be happy in the general felicity, every man purſues a private and independent intereſt, propoſes to himſelf ſome peculiar convenience, and prizes it more, as it is leſs attainable by others.

When the ties of ſociety are thus broken, and the general good of mankind is ſubdivided into the ſeparate advantages of individuals, it muſt neceſſarily happen, that many will deſire what few can poſſeſs, and conſequently, that ſome will be fortunate by the diſappointment, or defeat, of others; and ſince no man ſuffers diſappointment without pain, that one muſt become miſerable by another's happineſs.

This is however the natural condition of human life. As it is not poſſible for a being, neceſſitous and inſufficient as man, to act

wholly without regard to his intereſt, ſo it is difficult for him to place his intereſt at ſuch a diſtance from him, as to act, with conſtant and uniform diligence, in hopes only of happineſs flowing back upon him in its circulation through a whole community, to ſeek his own good, only by ſeeking the good of all others, of many whom he cannot know, and of many whom he cannot love. Such a diffuſion of intereſt, ſuch ſublimation of ſelf-love is to all difficult, becauſe it ſo places the end at a great diſtance from the endeavour; it is to many impoſſible, becauſe to many the end, thus removed, will be out of ſight. And ſo great are the numbers of thoſe whoſe views either nature has bounded, or corruption has contracted, that whoever labours only for the publick will ſoon be left to labour alone, and driven from his attention to the univerſe, which his ſingle care will very little benefit, to the inſpection of his own buſineſs, and the proſecution of his private wiſhes. Every man has, in the preſent ſtate of things, wants which cannot wait for publick plenty, and vexations which muſt be

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quieted before the days of univerſal peace. And no man can live only for others, unleſs he could perſuade others to live only for him.

The miſery of the world, therefore, ſo far as it ariſes from the inequality of conditions, is incurable. There are deſires, which almoſt all feel, but which all cannot gratify. Every man may, without a crime, ſtudy his own happineſs, if he be careful not to impede, by deſign, the happineſs of others. In the race of life, ſome moſt gain the prize, and others muſt loſe it; but the prize is honeſty gained by him who outruns his competitor, without endeavouring to overthrow him.

In the proſecution of private intereſt, which Providence has either ordained, or permitted, there muſt neceſſarily be ſome kind of ſtrife. Where bleſſings are thrown before us, as the reward of induſtry, there muſt be a conſtant ſtruggle of emulation. But this ſtrife would be without confuſion, if it were regulated by

reaſon and religion, if men would endeavour after lawful ends by lawful means.

But as there is a laudable deſire of meliorating the condition of life, which communities may not only allow, but encourage, as the parent of uſeful arts, by which firſt neceſſity was ſupplied, and conveniencies will always be multiplied; as there is likewiſe an honeſt contention for preference and ſuperiority, by which the powers of greater minds are puſhed into action, and the antient boundaries of ſcience are overpaſt; ſo there is likewiſe a ſtrife, of a pernicious and deſtructive kind, which daily diſturbs the quiet of individuals, and too frequently obſtructs, or diſturbs, the happineſs of nations; a ſtrife which always terminates in confuſion, and which it is therefore every man's duty to avoid himſelf, and every man's intereſt to repreſs in others.

This *ſtrife*, of which cometh *confuſion*, the Apoſtle has, in his prohibition, joined with envying. And daily experience will prove, that he has joined them with great propriety;

for perhaps there has ſeldom been any great and laſting ſtrife in the world, of which envy was not either the original motive, or the moſt forcible incentive. The ravages of religious enthuſiaſts, and the wars kindled by difference of opinions, may perhaps be conſidered as calamities, which cannot properly be imputed to envy; yet even theſe may often be juſtly ſuſpected of riſing from no higher, or nobler cauſes. A man convinced of the truth of his own tenets, wiſhing the happineſs of others, and conſidering happineſs as the certain conſequence of truth, is neceſſarily prompted to extend his opinions, and to fill the world with proſelytes. But ſurely pure zeal cannot carry him beyond warm diſpute, and earneſt exhortation; becauſe by diſpute and exhortation alone can *real* proſelytes be made. Violence may extort confeſſion from the tongue, but the mind muſt remain unchanged. Opinion, whether falſe or true, whether founded on evidence, or raiſed by prejudice, ſtands equally unſhaken in the tempeſts of commotion, and ſets at defiance the flames of hoſtility, and the ſword of perſecution.

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No man, whoſe reaſon is not darkened by ſome inordinate perturbation of mind, can poſſibly judge ſo abſurdly of beings, partakers of the ſame nature with himſelf, as to imagine that any opinion can be recommended by cruelty and miſchief, or that he, who cannot perceive the force of argument, will be more efficaciouſly inſtructed by penalties and tortures. The power of puniſhment is to *ſilence*, not to *confute*. It, therefore, can never ſerve for the effectual propagation, or obſtruction, of doctrines. It may indeed ſometimes hinder the diſſemination of falſehood, and check the progreſs of errour, but can never promote the reception of truth.

Whenever, therefore, we find the teacher, jealous of the honour of his ſect, and apparently more ſolicitous to ſee his opinions *eſtabliſhed* than *approved*, we may conclude, that he has added envy to his zeal; and that he feels more *pain from the want of victory*, than *pleaſure from the enjoyment of truth*.

It is the preſent mode of ſpeculation to charge theſe men with total hypocriſy, as wretches who have no other deſign but that of temporal advancement, and conſider religion only as one of the means by which power is gained, or wealth accumulated. But this charge, whatever may have been the depravity of ſingle perſons, is by no means generally true. The perſecutor and enthuſiaſt have often been ſuperior to the deſire of worldly poſſeſſions, or, at leaſt, have been abſtracted from it by ſtronger paſſions. There is a kind of mercantile ſpeculation, which aſcribes every action to intereſt, and conſiders intereſt as only another name for pecuniary advantage. But the boundleſs variety of human affections is not to be thus eaſily circumſcribed. Cauſes and effects, motives and actions, are complicated and diverſified without end. Many men make party ſubſervient to perſonal purpoſes; and many likewiſe ſuffer all private conſiderations to be abſorbed and loſt in their zeal for ſome publick cauſe. But envy ſtill operates, however

various

various in its appearance, however diſguiſed by ſpecious pretences, or however removed from notice by intermediate cauſes. All violence, beyond the neceſſity of ſelf-defence, is incited by the deſire of humbling the opponents, and, whenever it is applied to the deciſion of religious queſtions, aims at conqueſt, rather than converſion.

Since, therefore, envy is found to operate ſo often, and ſo ſecretly, and the *ſtrife* which ariſes from it is certain to end in *confuſion*, it is ſurely the duty of every man, who deſires the proſperity of his country, as connected with a particular community, or the general happineſs of the world, as allied to general humanity,

Firſt, To conſider, by what tokens he may diſcover in himſelf, or others, that *ſtrife* which ſprings from *envy*, and ends in *confuſion*.

Secondly, What are the evils, produced by that *confuſion*, which proceeds from *ſtrife*.

Firſt,

Firſt, Let us conſider, by what tokens we may diſcover in ourſelves, or others, that *ſtrife* which ſprings from *envy*, and ends in *confuſion*.

That ſtrife may well be ſuppoſed to proceed from ſome corrupt paſſion, which is carried on with vehemence, diſproportioned to the importance of the end openly propoſed. Men naturally value eaſe and tranquillity at a very high rate, and will not, on very ſmall cauſes, either ſuffer labour, or excite oppoſition. When, therefore, any man voluntarily engages in taſks of difficulty, and incurs danger, or ſuffers hardſhips, it muſt be imagined that he propoſes to himſelf ſome reward, more than equivalent to the comforts which he thus reſigns, and of which he ſeems to triumph in the reſignation; and if it cannot be found, that his labours tend to the advancement of ſome end, worthy of ſo much aſſiduity, he may juſtly be ſuppoſed to have formed to himſelf ſome imaginary intereſt, and to ſeek his gratification, not in that which

which he himſelf gains, but which another loſes.

It is a token that ſtrife proceeds from unlawful motives, when it is proſecuted by unlawful means. He that ſeeks only the right, and only for the ſake of right, will not eaſily ſuffer himſelf to be tranſported beyond the juſt and allowed methods of attaining it. To do evil that good may come, can never be the purpoſe of a man who has not perverted his morality by ſome falſe principle; and falſe principles are not ſo often collected by the judgement, as ſnatched up by the paſſions. The man whoſe duty gives way to his convenience, who, when once he has fixed his eye upon a diſtant end, haſtens to it by violence over forbidden ground, or creeps on towards it through the crooked paths of fraud and ſtratagem, as he has evidently ſome other guide than the word of God, muſt be ſuppoſed to have likewiſe ſome other purpoſe than the glory of God, or the benefit of man.

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The evidence of corrupt deſigns is much ſtrengthened, when unlawful means are uſed, in preference to thoſe which are recommended by reaſon, and warranted by juſtice.

When that which would have been granted to requeſt, or yielded to remonſtrance, is wantonly ſeized by ſudden violence, it is apparent that violence is choſen for its own ſake, and that the claimant pleaſes himſelf, not with the *poſſeſſion*, but the *power* by which it was gained, and the mortification of him, to whom his ſuperiority has not allowed the happineſs of choice, but has at once taken from him the honour of keeping, and the credit of reſigning.

There is another token that ſtrife is produced by the predominance of ſome vicious paſſion, when it is carried on againſt natural, or legal, ſuperiority. This token, though perhaps it is not very frequently fallacious, is not equally certain with the former; becauſe that ſuperiority which nature gives, or inſti-

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tutions eſtabliſh, too frequently incites inſolence, or oppreſſion; ſuch inſolence as may juſtly be reſtrained, and ſuch oppreſſion as may be lawfully reſiſted. Many modes of tyranny have been practiſed in the world, of which it is more natural to aſk, with wonder, why they were ſubmitted to ſo long, than why they were at laſt oppoſed and quelled. But if hiſtory and experience inform us that power and greatneſs grow wanton and licentious, that wealth and proſperity elate the mind, and enſlave the underſtanding to deſire, and when men once find that no one has power to controul them, they are ſeldom very attentive to juſtice, or very careful to controul themſelves: Hiſtory and experience will likewiſe ſhew us, that the contrary condition has its temptations and its crimes, that he who conſiders himſelf as ſubject to another, and liable to ſuffer by caprice or wickedneſs, often anticipates the evils of his ſtate, imagines himſelf to feel what he only fears, and imputes every failure of negligence, or ſtart of paſſion, to ſtudied tyranny and ſettled malevolence. To be inferior is neceſſarily unpleaſing,

pleaſing, to be placed in a ſtate of inferiority to thoſe who have no eminent abilities, or tranſcendent merit, (which muſt happen in all political conſtitutions) increaſes the uneaſineſs; and every man finds in himſelf a ſtrong inclination to throw down from their elevated ſtate thoſe whom he obeys without approbation, whom he reverences without eſteem. When the paſſions are once in motion, they are not eaſily appeaſed, or checked. He that has once concluded it lawful to reſiſt power, when it wants merit, will ſoon find a want of merit, to juſtify his reſiſtance of power.

Thus, if we conſider the conduct of individuals towards each other, we ſhall commonly find the labourer murmuring at him who ſeems to live by eaſier means. We ſhall hear the poor repining that others are rich, and even the rich ſpeaking with malignity of thoſe who are ſtill richer than themſelves.

And if we ſurvey the condition of kingdoms and commonwealths, it will always be obſerved, that governors are cenſured, that every

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miſchief of chance is imputed to ill deſigns, and that nothing can perſuade mankind, that they are not injured by an adminiſtration, either unſkilful, or corrupt. It is very difficult always to do right. To ſeem always to do right to thoſe who deſire to diſcover wrong, is ſcarcely poſſible. Every man is ready to form expectations in his own favour, ſuch as never can be gratified, and which will yet raiſe complaints, if they are diſappointed.

Such is commonly the diſpoſition, with which men look upon thoſe who are placed above them, and with ſuch diſpoſitions we cannot hope that they ſhould be often pleaſed. Life is a ſtate of imperfection, and yet every man exacts from his ſuperiours conſummate wiſdom, and unfailing virtue; and whenever he ſees, or believes himſelf to ſee, either vice or errour, thinks himſelf at liberty to looſen the ties of duty, and paſs the boundaries of ſubordination, without conſidering that of ſuch *ſtrife* there muſt come *confuſion*, or without knowing, what we ſhall conſider,

Secondly,

Secondly, The evils and miſchiefs produced by that *confuſion* which ariſes from *ſtrife*.

That the deſtruction of order, and the abolition of ſtated regulations, muſt fill the world with uncertainty, diſtraction, and ſollicitude, is apparent, without any long deduction of argument. Yet it has too frequently happened, that thoſe who either feel their wiſhes reſtrained, ſee their fortunes wearing away, or imagine their merit neglected, and their abilities employed upon buſineſs unworthy of their attention, deſire times of tumult and diſturbance, as affording the faireſt opportunities for the active and ſagacious to diſtinguiſh themſelves, and as throwing open the avenues of wealth and honour, to be entered by thoſe who have the greateſt quickneſs of diſcernment, and celerity of diſpatch. In times of peace every thing proceeds in a train of regularity, and there is no ſudden advantage to be ſnatched, nor any unuſual change of condition to be hoped. But when ſedition and uproar have once ſilenced law, and confounded

property, then is the hour when chance begins to predominate in the world, when every man may hope without bounds, and thoſe, who know how to improve the lucky moment, may gain in a day what no length of labour could have procured, without the concurrence of caſual advantage.

This is the expectation which makes ſome haſten on confuſion, and others look with concern at its approach. But what is this other than gaining by univerſal miſery, ſupplying by force the want of right, and riſing to ſudden elevation, by the ſudden downfal of others?

The great benefit of ſociety is that the weak are protected againſt the ſtrong. The great evil of confuſion is that the world is thrown into the hands, not of the beſt, but of the ſtrongeſt; that all certainty of poſſeſſion or acquiſition is deſtroyed; that every man's care is confined to his own intereſt; and that general negligence of the general good makes way for general licentiouſneſs.

Of

Of the ſtrife, which this day brings back to our remembrance, we may obſerve, that it had all the tokens of *ſtrife* proceeding from *envy*. The rage of the faction, which invaded the rights of the Church and Monarchy, was diſproportionate to the provocation received. The violence, with which hoſtility was proſecuted, was more than the cauſe, that was publickly avowed, could incite or juſtify. Perſonal reſentment was apparent in the perſecution of particular men, and the bitterneſs of faction broke out in all the debates upon publick queſtions. No ſecurities could quiet ſuſpicion, no conceſſions could ſatisfy exorbitance. Uſurpation was added to uſurpation; demand was accumulated on demand; and, when war had decided againſt loyalty, inſult was added to inſult, and exaction to exaction.

As the end was unjuſt, the means likewiſe were illegal. The power of the faction commenced by clamour, was promoted by rebellion, and eſtabliſhed by murder; by murder

of the moſt atrocious kind, deliberate, contumelious, and cruel; by murder, not neceſſary even to the ſafety of thoſe by whom it was committed, but choſen in preference to any other expedient for ſecurity.

This war certainly did not want the third token of *ſtrife* proceeding from *envy*. It was a war of the rabble againſt their ſuperiours; a war, in which the loweſt and baſeſt of the people were encouraged by men a little higher than themſelves, to lift their hands againſt their eccleſiaſtical and civil Governours, and by which thoſe who were grown impatient of obedience, endeavoured to obtain the power of commanding.

This *ſtrife*, as we all know, ended in *confuſion*. Our laws were over-ruled, our rights were aboliſhed. The ſoldier ſeized upon the property, the fanatick ruſhed into the church. The Uſurpers gave way to other Uſurpers; the Schiſmaticks were thruſt out by other Schiſmaticks; the people felt nothing from their maſters but alternatives of oppreſſion, and heard nothing from their teachers but varieties of errour. Such

Such was the *ſtrife*, and ſuch was the *confuſion*. Such are the evils which God ſometimes permits to fall upon nations, when they ſtand ſecure in their own greatneſs, and forget their dependence on univerſal ſovereignty, depart from the laws of their Maker, corrupt the purity of his worſhip, or ſwerve from the truth of his revelation. Such evils ſurely we have too much reaſon to fear again, for we have no right to charge our Anceſtors with having provoked them by crimes greater than our own.

Let us therefore be warned by the calamities of paſt ages; and thoſe miſeries which are due to our ſins, let us avert by our penitence. *Let the wicked forſake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.*

SERMON XI.

PROVERBS, XXIX. 2.

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.

THAT the inſtitutions of government owe their original, like other human actions, to the deſire of happineſs, is not to be denied; nor is it leſs generally allowed, that they have been perverted to very different ends from thoſe which they were intended to promote. This is a truth, which it would be very ſuperfluous to prove by authorities, or illuſtrate by examples. Every page of hiſtory, whether ſacred or profane, will furniſh us abundantly with inſtances of Rulers that have

deviated from juſtice, and ſubjects that have forgotten their allegiance; of nations ruined by the tyranny of Governours, and of Governours overborne by the madneſs of the populace. Inſtead of a concurrence between Governour and ſubjects for their mutual advantage, they ſeem to have conſidered each other, not as allies or friends, to be aided or ſupported, but as enemies, whoſe proſperity was inconſiſtent with their own, and who were therefore to be ſubdued by open force, or ſubjected by ſecret ſtratagems.

Thus have ſlavery and licentiouſneſs ſucceeded one another, and anarchy and deſpotick power alternately prevailed. Virtue has, at one time, ſtood expoſed to the puniſhments of vice; and vice, at another time, enjoyed the ſecurity and privileges of virtue. Nor have communities ſuffered more, when they were expoſed to the paſſions and caprices of one man, however cruel, ambitious, or inſolent, than when all reſtraint has been taken off the actions of men by publick confuſions, and every one left at full liberty to indulge his own

own deſires, and comply, without fear of puniſhment, with his wildeſt imaginations.

Man is, for the moſt part, equally unhappy, when ſubjected, without redreſs, to the paſſions of another, or left, without controul, to the dominion of his own. This every man, however unwilling he may be to own it of himſelf, will very readily acknowledge of his neighbour. No man knows any one, except himſelf, whom he judges fit to be ſet free from the coertion of laws, and to be abandoned entirely to his own choice. By this conſideration have all civilized nations been induced to the enactions of penal laws, laws, by which every man's danger becomes every man's ſafety, and by which, though all are reſtrained, yet all are benefited.

Government is therefore neceſſary, in the opinion of every one, to the ſafety of particular men, and the happineſs of ſociety; and it may be conſidered as a maxim univerſally admitted, that *the people* cannot *rejoice*, except *the righteous are in authority*; that no publick

lick proſperity, or private quiet, can be hoped for, but from the juſtice and wiſdom of thoſe, to whom the adminiſtration of affairs, and the execution of the laws, is committed. For corrupt governments operate, with equal force and efficacy, to the deſtruction of a people, as good governments to their preſervation.

But that authority may never ſwell into tyranny, or languiſh into ſupineneſs, and that ſubjection may never degenerate into ſlavery, nor freedom kindle into rebellion, it may be proper, both for thoſe who are intruſted with power, and thoſe from whom obedience is required, to conſider,

Firſt, How much it is the duty of thoſe in authority to promote the happineſs of the people.

Secondly, By what means the happineſs of the people may be moſt effectually promoted.

Thirdly, How the people are to aſſiſt and further the endeavours of their Governours.

Firſt,

Firſt, How much it is the duty of thoſe in authority to promote the happineſs of the people.

If it be true in general that no man is born merely for his own ſake, to conſult his own advantage or pleaſure, unconnected with the good of others; it is yet more evidently true of thoſe who are exalted into high rank, dignified with honours, and inveſted with authority. Their ſuperiority is not to be conſidered as a ſanction for lazineſs, or a privilege for vice. They are not to conceive, that their paſſions are to be allowed a wider range, or their appetites ſet more free from ſubjection to reaſon, than thoſe of others. They are not to conſult their own glory, at the expence of the lives of others, or to gratify their avarice, by plundering thoſe whom diligence and labour have entitled to affluence. They are not to conceive that power gives a right to oppreſs, and to puniſh thoſe who murmur at oppreſſion.

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They are to look upon their power, and their greatneſs, as inſtruments placed in their hands, to be employed for the publick advantage. They are to remember they are placed upon an eminence, that their examples may be more conſpicuous, and that, therefore, they muſt take care, leſt they teach thoſe vices which they ought to ſuppreſs. They muſt reflect, that it is their duty to ſecure property from the attempts of rapine and robbery, and that thoſe whom they protect, will be very little benefited by their care, if, what they reſcue from others, they take away themſelves.

It appears from thoſe ſtruggles for dominion, which have filled the world with war, bloodſhed, and deſolation, and have torn in pieces almoſt all the ſtates and kingdoms of the earth, and from thoſe daily conteſts for ſubordinate authority, which diſturb the quiet of ſmaller ſocieties, that there is ſomewhat in power more pleaſing than in any other enjoyment; and, conſequently, to be-

ſtow upon man the happineſs of ruling others, is to beſtow upon him the greateſt benefit he is capable of receiving. Nothing then can equal the obligation of Governours to the people, and nothing but the moſt flagrant ingratitude can make them careleſs of the intereſts, or unconcerned at the misfortunes, of thoſe to whom they owe that, for which no danger has been thought too dreadful to be encountered, no labour too tedious to be undergone, and no crime too horrible to be committed.

Gratitude is a ſpecies of juſtice. He that requites a benefit may be ſaid, in ſome ſenſe, to pay a debt; and, of courſe, he that forgets favours received may be accuſed of neglecting to pay what he cannot be denied to owe. But this is not the only ſenſe in which juſtice may be ſaid to require from a Governour an attention to the wants and petitions of the people. He that engages in the management of publick buſineſs, takes a truſt upon him, which it was in his power to decline, and which he is therefore bound to diſcharge with diligence

diligence and fidelity; a truſt which is of the higheſt honour, becauſe it is of the greateſt difficulty and importance, a truſt which includes, not only the care of the property, but of the morals of the people.

It is with the juſteſt reaſon, that large revenues, pompous titles, and all that contributes to the happineſs of life, are annexed to theſe high offices; for what reward can be too great for him, to whom multitudes are indebted for the ſecure enjoyment of their poſſeſſions? for him, whoſe authority checks the progreſs of vice, and aſſiſts the advancement of virtue, reſtrains the violence of the oppreſſour, and aſſerts the cauſe of the injured? Theſe are doubtleſs merits above the common rate, merits which can hardly be too loudly celebrated, or too liberally rewarded.

But it is always to be obſerved, that he only deſerves the recompence, who performs the work for which it is propoſed; and that he, who wears the honours, and receives the revenues,

revenues, of an exalted nation, without attending to the duties of his poſt, is, in a very high degree, criminal, both in the eye of God and man.

It is, therefore, the certain and apparent duty of thoſe that are in authority, to take care that the people may rejoice, and diligently to enquire, what is to be conſidered,

Secondly, By what means the happineſs of the people may be moſt effectually promoted.

In political, as well as natural diſorders, the great errour of thoſe who commonly undertake, either cure or preſervation, is, that they reſt in ſecond cauſes, without extending their ſearch to the remote and original ſources of evil. They therefore obviate the immediate evil, but leave the deſtructive principle to operate again; and have their work for ever to begin, like the huſbandman who mows down the heads of noiſome weeds, inſtead of pulling up the roots.

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The only uniform and perpetual cauſe of publick happineſs is publick virtue. The effects of all other things which are conſidered as advantages, will be found caſual and tranſitory. Without virtue nothing can be ſecurely poſſeſſed, or properly enjoyed.

In a country like ours, the great demand, which is for ever repeated to our Governours, is for the ſecurity of property, the confirmation of liberty, and the extenſion of commerce. All this we have obtained, and all this we poſſeſs, in a degree which perhaps was never granted to any other people. Yet we ſtill find ſomething wanting to our happineſs, and turn ourſelves round on all ſides, with perpetual reſtleſſneſs, to find that remedy for our evils which neither power nor policy can afford.

That eſtabliſhed property and inviolable freedom are the greateſt of political felicities, no man can be ſuppoſed likely to deny. To depend on the will of another, to labour for that,

that, of which arbitrary power can prohibit the enjoyment, is the ſtate to which want of reaſon has ſubjected the brute. To be happy we muſt know our own rights; and we muſt know them to be ſafe.

But though this knowledge be neceſſary to happineſs, this knowledge is not ſufficient. Liberty, if not regulated by virtue, can be only licence to do evil; and property, if not virtuouſly enjoyed, can only corrupt the poſſeſſor, and give him the power to injure others. Trade may make us rich; but riches, without goodneſs, cannot make us happy.

Let us, however, ſuppoſe that theſe external goods have that power which wiſdom cannot believe, and which experience never could confirm; let us ſuppoſe that riches and liberty could make us happy. It then remains to be conſidered, how riches and liberty can be ſecured. To this the Politician has a ready anſwer, that they are to be ſecured by laws wiſely formed, and vigorouſly executed. But, as laws can be made only by a ſmall

part of an extenſive empire, and muſt be executed by a part yet far ſmaller, what ſhall protect us againſt the laws themſelves? And how ſhall we be certain, that they ſhall not be made without regard to the public good, or ſhall not be perverted to oppreſſion by the miniſters of juſtice?

But if proſperity, and laws, by which, as far as the mutability of this world permits, that proſperity is made permanent and ſafe, cannot make the people happy, what is it the Governours can do? How far is their care to be extended, and what more can ſkill and vigilance perform? The wiſdom of mankind has been exerciſed in enquiries how riches may be gained and kept; how the different claims of men may be adjuſted without violence; and how one part of the community may be reſtrained from encroachments on the other. For this end governments have been inſtituted, in all their various forms, with much ſtudy, and too often with much bloodſhed. But what is the uſe of all this, if, when theſe ends are obtained, there is yet ſo much wanting to felicity?

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I am far from intending to inſinuate, that the ſtudies of political wiſdom, or the labours of legiſlative patriotiſm, have been vain and idle. They are uſeful, but not effectual; they are conducive to that end, which yet they cannot fully gain. The Legiſlator, who does what human power can attain towards the felicity of his fellow-creatures, is not to be cenſured, becauſe, by the imbecillity of all human endeavours, he fails of his purpoſe; unleſs he has become culpable, by aſcribing too much to his own powers, and arrogated to his induſtry, or his wit, that efficacy which wit and induſtry muſt always want, unleſs ſome higher power lends them aſſiſtance, and co-operates with them.

The huſbandman may plow his fields with induſtry, and ſow them with ſkill; he may manure them copiouſly, and fence them carefully; but the harveſt muſt depend at laſt on celeſtial influence; and all his diligence is fruſtrated, unleſs the ſun ſheds its warmth, and the clouds pour down their moiſture.

Thus, in all human affairs, when prudence and induſtry have done their utmoſt, the work is left to be completed by ſuperior agency; and in the ſecurity of peace, and ſtability of poſſeſſion, our policy muſt at laſt call for help upon religion.

Human laws, however honeſtly inſtituted, or however vigorouſly enforced, muſt be limited in their effect, partly by our ignorance, and partly by our weakneſs. Daily experience may convince us, that all the avenues by which injury and oppreſſion may break in upon life, cannot be guarded by poſitive prohibitions. Every man ſees, and may feel, evils, which no law can puniſh. And not only will there always remain poſſibilities of guilt, which legiſlative foreſight cannot diſcover, but the laws will be often violated by wicked men, whoſe ſubtilty eludes detection, and whom therefore vindictive juſtice cannot bring within the reach of puniſhment.

Theſe deficiencies in civil life can be ſupplied only by religion. The mere obſerver of

of human laws avoids only ſuch offences as the laws forbid, and thoſe only when the laws can detect his delinquency. But he who acts with the perpetual conſciouſneſs of the divine preſence, and conſiders himſelf as accountable for all his actions to the irreverſible and unerring judgement of omniſcience, has other motives of action, and other reaſons of forbearance. He is equally reſtrained from evil, in public life, and in ſecret ſolitude; and has only one rule of action, by which *he does to others what he would that others ſhould do to him*, and wants no other enforcement of his duty, than the fear of future puniſhment, and the hope of future rewards.

The firſt duty therefore of a Governour is to diffuſe through the community a ſpirit of religion, to endeavour that a ſenſe of the divine authority ſhould prevail in all orders of men, and that the laws ſhould be obeyed, in ſubordination to the univerſal and unchangeable edicts of the Creatour and Ruler of the world.

How religion may be moſt effectually promoted, is an enquiry which every Governour ought diligently to make; and he that enquires, with real wiſhes for information, will ſoon know his duty; for Providence has ſeldom made the ſame things neceſſary and abſtruſe.

That religion may be invigorated and diffuſed, it is neceſſary that the external order of religion be diligently maintained, that the ſolemnities of worſhip be duly obſerved, and a proper reverence preſerved for the times and the places appropriated to piety. The appropriations of time and place are indeed only means to the great end of holineſs; but they are means, without which the end cannot be obtained; and every man muſt have obſerved, how much corruption prevails, where the attention to publick worſhip and to holy ſeaſons is broken or relaxed.

Thoſe that have in their hands the diſpoſal of riches or honours ought to beſtow them on perſons

perſons who are moſt eminent for ſanctity of life. For though no man ought to conſider temporary goods as the proper rewards of religious duties, yet they, who have them to give, are obliged to diſtribute them in ſuch a manner as may make them moſt uſeful to the publick; and they will be moſt uſeful, when they increaſe the power of beneficence, and enlarge the influence of piety.

It yet remains that Governours co-operate with their laws by their own examples, and that as, by their height of place, they are always conſpicuous, they exhibit to thoſe eyes which are turned upon them *the beauty of holineſs*.

The preſent ſtate of the world however affords us little hope, that virtue can, by any government, be ſo ſtrongly impreſſed, or ſo widely diffuſed, as to ſuperſede the neceſſity of ſuppreſſing wickedneſs. In the moſt diligent cultivation of the happieſt ſoil, weeds will ſometimes appear among fruits and flowers, and all that vigilance and labour can do

is to check them as they riſe. However virtue may be encouraged or rewarded, it can never appear to all minds the ſhorteſt means of preſent good. There will always be thoſe who would rather grow rich by fraud, than by diligence, and who will provide for vicious pleaſures by violence, rather than by labour. Againſt the attempts and artifices of ſuch men, whence have ſimplicity and innocence their defence and ſecurity? Whence, but from the *Lex armata*, the vindictive law, that ſtands forth the champion of the weak, and the protectreſs of the innocent?

Nor is quiet and ſecurity in danger only from corrupt minds; for honeſt and beneficent men might often, were not the law to interpoſe, diſturb ſociety, and fill the country with violence. Two men, both of them wiſe, and both of them virtuous, may lay claim to the ſame poſſeſſion, with pretenſions, to the world ſpecious, in their own thoughts juſt. Such diſputes can be terminated only by force or law. Of force, it is apparent, that the exertion of it is an immediate evil, and that prevalence

valence at laſt will be no proof of juſtice. Of law, the means are gentle and inoffenſive, and the concluſion not only the confirmation of property, but the eſtabliſhment of right. For this power of the law virtue itſelf will leave employment; for though crimes would hardly be committed but by predominance of paſſion, yet litigation muſt always ſubſiſt while there is difference of opinion. We can hope but faintly for the time when all men ſhall be honeſt; but the time ſeems ſtill more remote in which all men ſhall be wiſe; and until we may be able to ſettle all claims for ourſelves, let us rejoice that there is law to adjuſt them for us.

The care however of the beſt Governour may be fruſtrated by diſobedience and perverſeneſs; and the beſt laws may ſtrive in vain againſt radicated wickedneſs.

It is therefore fit to conſider,

Thirdly, How the people are to aſſiſt and further the endeavours of their Governours.

As all government is power exerted by few upon many, it is apparent, that nations cannot be governed but by their own conſent. The firſt duty therefore of ſubjects is obedience to the laws; ſuch obedience as is the effect, not of compulſion, but of reverence; ſuch as ariſes from a conviction of the inſtability of human virtue, and of the neceſſity of ſome coercive power, which may reſtrain the exorbitancies of paſſion, and check the career of natural deſires.

No man thinks laws unneceſſary for others; and no man, if he conſiders his own inherent frailty, can juſtly think them unneceſſary for himſelf. The wiſeſt man is not always wiſe, and the beſt man is not always good. We all ſometimes want the admonition of law, as ſupplemental to the dictates of reaſon, and the ſuggeſtions of conſcience. And he that encourages irreverence, in himſelf, or others, to public inſtitutions, weakens all the human ſecurities of peace, and all the corroborations of virtue.

That

That the proper influence of government may be preſerved, and that the liberty which a juſt diſtribution of power naturally ſupports may not operate to its deſtruction, it is always to be remembered, that even the errours and deficiencies of authority muſt be treated with reſpect. All inſtitutions are defective by their nature; and all Rulers have their imperfections, like other men. But, as not every failing makes a bad man, ſo not every errour makes a bad government; and he that conſiders how few can properly adjuſt their own houſes, will not wonder that into the multiplicity of national affairs deception or negligence ſhould ſometimes find their way. It is likewiſe neceſſary to remember, that as government is difficult to be adminiſtered, it is difficult to be underſtood; and that where very few have capacity to judge, very few have a right to cenſure.

The happineſs of a nation muſt ariſe from the combined endeavours of Governours and ſubjects. The duties of governing can be the

lot of few, but all of us have the duties of ſubjects to perform; and every man ought to incite in himſelf, and in his neighbour, that obedience to the laws, and that reſpect to the chief Magiſtrate, which may ſecure and promote concord and quiet. Of this, as of all other virtues, the true baſis is religion. The laws will be eaſily obeyed by him who adds to human ſanctions the obligations of conſcience; and he will not eaſily be diſpoſed to cenſure his ſuperiors, whom religion has made acquainted with his own failings.

SER-

SERMON XII.

[Written by Dr. JOHNSON, for the Funeral of his Wife.]

JOHN XI. 25, 26 (former part).

Jeſus ſaid unto her, I am the Reſurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live;
And whoſoever liveth, and believeth in me, ſhall never die.

TO afford adequate conſolations to the laſt hour, to cheer the gloomy paſſage through the valley of the ſhadow of death, and to eaſe that anxiety, to which beings, preſcient of their own diſſolution, and conſcious of their own danger, muſt be neceſſarily expoſed, is the privilege only of revealed religion.

religion. All thoſe, to whom the ſupernatural light of heavenly doctrine has never been imparted, however formidable for power, or illuſtrious for wiſdom, have wanted that knowledge of their future ſtate which alone can give comfort to miſery, or ſecurity to enjoyment; and have been forced to ruſh forwards to the grave, through the darkneſs of ignorance; or, if they happened to be more refined and inquiſitive, to ſolace their paſſage with the fallacious and uncertain glimmer of philoſophy.

There were, doubtleſs, at all times, as there are now, many who lived with very little thought concerning their end; many whoſe time was wholly filled up by public or domeſtic buſineſs, by the purſuits of ambition, or the deſire of riches; many who diſſolved themſelves in luxurious enjoyment, and, when they could lull their minds by any preſent pleaſure, had no regard to diſtant events, but withheld their imagination from ſallying out into futurity, or catching any terrour that might interrupt their quiet; and there were many who

who roſe ſo little above animal life, that they were completely engroſſed by the objects about them, and had their views extended no farther than to the next hour; in whom the ray of reaſon was half extinct, and who had neither hopes nor fears, but of ſome near advantage, of ſome preſſing danger.

But multitudes there muſt always be, and greater multitudes as arts and civility prevail, who cannot wholly withdraw their thoughts from death. All cannot be diſtracted with buſineſs, or ſtunned with the clamours of aſſemblies, or the ſhouts of armies. All cannot live in the perpetual diſſipation of ſucceſſive diverſions, nor will all enſlave their underſtandings to their ſenſes, and ſeek felicity in the groſs gratifications of appetite. Some muſt always keep their reaſon and their fancy in action, and ſeek either honour or pleaſure from intellectual operations; and from them, others, more negligent or ſluggiſh, will be in time fixed or awakened; knowledge will be perpetually diffuſed, and curioſity hourly enlarged.

But,

But, when the faculties were once put in motion, when the Mind had broken looſe from the ſhackles of ſenſe, and made excurſions to remote conſequences, the firſt conſideration that would ſtop her courſe muſt be the inceſſant waſte of life, the approach of age, and the certainty of death; the approach of that time, in which ſtrength muſt fail, and pleaſure fly away, and the certainty of that diſſolution which ſhall put an end to all the proſpects of this world. It is impoſſible to think, and not ſometimes to think on death. Hope, indeed, has many powers of deluſion; whatever is poſſible, however unlikely, it will teach us to promiſe ourſelves; but death no man has eſcaped, and therefore no man can hope to eſcape it. From this dreadful expectation no ſhelter or refuge can be found. Whatever we ſee, forces it upon us; whatever is, new or old, flouriſhing or declining, either directly, or by a very ſhort deduction, leads man to the conſideration of his end; and accordingly we find, that the fear of death has always been conſidered as the great enemy of human quiet, the polluter of the feaſt of happineſs, and em-

bitterer

bitterer of the cup of joy. The young man who rejoiceth in his youth, amidſt his muſick and his gaiety, has always been diſturbed with the thought, that his youth will be quickly at an end. The monarch, to whom it is ſaid that he is a God, has always been reminded by his own heart, that he ſhall die like man.

This unwelcome conviction, which is thus continually preſſed upon the mind, every art has been employed to oppoſe. The general remedy, in all ages, has been to chaſe it away from the preſent moment, and to gain a ſuſpence of the pain that could not be cured. In the ancient writings, we, therefore, find the ſhortneſs of life frequently mentioned as an excitement to jollity and pleaſure; and may plainly diſcover, that the authours had no other means of relieving that gloom with which the uncertainty of human life clouded their conceptions. Some of the Philoſophers, indeed, appear to have ſought a nobler, and a more certain remedy, and to have endeavoured to overpower the force of death by arguments, and to diſpel the gloom by the light

of reaſon. They enquired into the nature of the ſoul of man, and ſhewed, at leaſt probably, that it is a ſubſtance diſtinct from matter, and therefore independent on the body, and exempt from diſſolution and corruption. The arguments, whether phyſical or moral, upon which they eſtabliſhed this doctrine, it is not neceſſary to recount to a Chriſtian audience, by whom it is believed upon more certain proofs, and higher authority; ſince, though they were ſuch as might determine the calm mind of a Philoſopher, inquiſitive only after truth, and uninfluenced by external objects; yet they were ſuch as required leiſure and capacity, not allowed in general to mankind; they were ſuch as many could never underſtand, and of which, therefore, the efficacy and comfort were confined to a ſmall number, without any benefit to the unenlightened multitude.

Such has been hitherto the nature of philoſophical arguments, and ſuch it muſt probably for ever remain; for, though, perhaps, the ſucceſſive induſtry of the ſtudious may increaſe the

the number, or advance the probability, of arguments; and, though continual contemplation of matter will, I believe, ſhew it, at length, wholly incapable of motion, ſenſation, or order, by any powers of its own, and therefore neceſſarily eſtabliſh the immateriality, and, probably, the immortality of the ſoul; yet there never can be expected a time, in which the groſs body of mankind can attend to ſuch ſpeculations, or can comprehend them; and, therefore, there never can be a time, in which this knowledge can be taught in ſuch a manner, as to be generally conducive to virtue, or happineſs, but by a meſſenger from God, from the Creatour of the World, and the Father of Spirits.

To perſuade common and uninſtructed minds to the belief of any fact, we may every day perceive, that the teſtimony of one man, whom they think worthy of credit, has more force than the arguments of a thouſand reaſoners, even when the arguments are ſuch as they may be imagined completely qualified to comprehend. Hence it is plain, that the con-

ſtitution of mankind is ſuch, that abſtruſe and intellectual truths can be taught no otherwiſe than by poſitive aſſertion, ſupported by ſome ſenſible evidence, by which the aſſertor is ſecured from the ſuſpicion of falſehood; and that if it ſhould pleaſe God to inſpire a teacher with ſome demonſtration of the immortality of the ſoul, it would far leſs avail him for general inſtruction, than the power of working a miracle in its vindication, unleſs God ſhould, at the ſame time, inſpire all the hearers with docility and apprehenſion, and turn, at once, all the ſenſual, the giddy, the lazy, the buſy, the corrupt, and the proud, into humble, abſtracted, and diligent Philoſophers.

To bring life and immortality to light, to give ſuch proofs of our future exiſtence, as may influence the moſt narrow mind, and fill the moſt capacious intellect, to open proſpects beyond the grave, in which the thought may expatiate without obſtruction, and to ſupply a refuge and ſupport to the mind, amidſt all the miſeries of decaying nature, is the peculiar excellence of the Goſpel of Chriſt. Without this heavenly

heavenly Inſtructor, he who feels himſelf ſinking under the weight of years, or melting away by the ſlow waſte of a lingering diſeaſe, has no other remedy than obdurate patience, a gloomy reſignation to that which cannot be avoided; and he who follows his friend, or whoever there is yet dearer than a friend, to the grave, can have no other conſolation than that which he derives from the general miſery; the reflection, that he ſuffers only what the reſt of mankind muſt ſuffer; a poor conſideration, which rather awes us to ſilence, than ſooths us to quiet, and which does not abate the ſenſe of our calamity, though it may ſometimes make us aſhamed to complain.

But ſo much is our condition improved by the Goſpel, ſo much is the ſting of death rebated, that we may now be invited to the contemplation of our mortality, as to a pleaſing employment of the mind, to an exerciſe delightful and recreative, not only when calamity and perſecution drive us out from the aſſemblies of men, and ſorrow and woe repreſent the grave as a refuge and an aſylum, but even

in the hours of the higheſt earthly proſperity, when our cup is full, and when we have laid up ſtores for ourſelves; for, in him who believes the promiſe of the Saviour of the World, it can cauſe no diſturbance to remember, that this night his ſoul may be required of him; and he who ſuffers one of the ſharpeſt evils which this life can ſhew, amidſt all its varieties of miſery; he that has lately been ſeparated from the perſon whom a long participation of good and evil had endeared to him; he who has ſeen kindneſs ſnatched from his arms, and fidelity torn from his boſom; he whoſe ear is no more to be delighted with tender inſtruction, and whoſe virtue ſhall be no more awakened by the ſeaſonable whiſpers of mild reproof, may yet look, without horrour, on the tomb which encloſes the remains of what he loved and honoured, as upon a place which, if it revives the ſenſe of his loſs, may calm him with the hope of that ſtate in which there ſhall be no more grief or ſeparation.

To Chriſtians the celebration of a funeral is by no means a ſolemnity of barren and unavailing

vailing ſorrow, but eſtabliſhed by the Church for other purpoſes.

Firſt, for the conſolation of ſorrow. Secondly, for the enforcement of piety. The mournful ſolemnity of the burial of the dead is inſtituted, firſt, for the conſolation of that grief to which the beſt minds, if not ſupported and regulated by religion, are moſt liable. They who moſt endeavour the happineſs of others, who devote their thoughts to tenderneſs and pity, and ſtudiouſly maintain the reciprocation of kindneſs, by degrees mingle their ſouls, in ſuch a manner, as to feel from their ſeparation, a total deſtitution of happineſs, a ſudden abruption of all their proſpects, a ceſſation of all their hopes, ſchemes and deſires. The whole mind becomes a gloomy vacuity, without any image or form of pleaſure, a chaos of confuſed wiſhes, directed to no particular end, or to that which, while we wiſh, we cannot hope to obtain; for the dead will not revive; thoſe whom God has called away from the preſent ſtate of exiſtence, can be ſeen no more in it; we muſt go to them; but they cannot return to us.

Yet, to ſhew that grief is vain, is to afford very little comfort; yet this is all that reaſon can afford; but religion, our only friend in the moment of diſtreſs, in the moment when the help of man is vain, when fortitude and cowardice ſink down together, and the ſage and the virgin mingle their lamentations; religion will inform us, that ſorrow and complaint are not only vain, but unreaſonable and erroneous. The voice of God, ſpeaking by his Son, and his Apoſtles, will inſtruct us, that ſhe, whoſe departure we now mourn, is not dead, but ſleepeth; that only her body is committed to the ground, but that the ſoul is returned to God, who gave it; that God, who is infinitely merciful, who hateth nothing that he has made, who deſireth not the death of a ſinner; to that God, who only can compare performance with ability, who alone knows how far the heart has been pure, or corrupted, how inadvertency has ſurpriſed, fear has betrayed, or weakneſs has impeded; to that God, who marks every aſpiration after a better ſtate, who hears the prayer which the

voice

voice cannot utter, records the purpoſe that periſhed without opportunity of action, the wiſh that vaniſhed away without attainment, who is always ready to receive the penitent, to whom ſincere contrition is never late, and who will accept the tears of a returning ſinner.

Such are the reflections to which we are called by the voice of Truth; and from theſe we ſhall find that comfort which philoſophy cannot ſupply, and that peace which the world cannot give. The contemplation of the mercy of God may juſtly afford ſome conſolation, even when the office of burial is performed to thoſe who have been ſnatched away without viſible amendment of their lives: for, who ſhall preſume to determine the ſtate of departed ſouls, to lay open what God hath concealed, and to ſearch the counſels of the Moſt Higheſt?—But, with more confident hope of pardon and acceptance, may we commit thoſe to the receptacles of mortality, who have lived without any open or enormous crimes; who have endeavoured to propitiate God by repentance,

pentance, and have died, at laſt, with hope and reſignation. Among theſe ſhe ſurely may be remembered whom we have followed hither to the tomb, to pay her the laſt honours, and to reſign her to the grave: ſhe, whom many, who now hear me, have known, and whom none, who were capable of diſtinguiſhing either moral or intellectual excellence, could know, without eſteem, or tenderneſs. To praiſe the extent of her knowledge, the acuteneſs of her wit, the accuracy of her judgement, the force of her ſentiments, or the elegance of her expreſſion, would ill ſuit with the occaſion.

Such praiſe would little profit the living, and as little gratify the dead, who is now in a place where vanity and competition are forgotten for ever; where ſhe finds a cup of water given for the relief of a poor brother, a prayer uttered for the mercy of God to thoſe whom ſhe wanted power to relieve, a word of inſtruction to ignorance, a ſmile of comfort to miſery, of more avail than all thoſe accompliſhments which confer honour and diſtinc-

tion

tion among the ſons of Folly.—Yet, let it be remembered, that her wit was never employed to ſcoff at goodneſs, nor her reaſon to diſpute againſt truth. In this age of wild opinions, ſhe was as free from ſcepticiſm as the cloiſtered virgin. She never wiſhed to ſignalize herſelf by the ſingularity of paradox. She had a juſt diffidence of her own reaſon, and deſired to practiſe rather than diſpute. Her practice was ſuch as her opinions naturally produced. She was exact and regular in her devotions, full of confidence in the divine mercy, ſubmiſſive to the diſpenſations of Providence, extenſively charitable in her judgements and opinions, grateful for every kindneſs that ſhe received, and willing to impart aſſiſtance of every kind to all whom her little power enabled her to benefit. She paſſed through many months languour, weakneſs, and decay, without a ſingle murmur of impatience, and often expreſſed her adoration of that mercy which granted her ſo long time for recollection and penitence. That ſhe had no failings, cannot be ſuppoſed: but ſhe has now appeared before the Almighty Judge; and it would ill become beings like

us,

us, weak and ſinful as herſelf, to remember thoſe faults which, we truſt, Eternal Purity has pardoned.

Let us therefore preſerve her memory for no other end but to imitate her virtues; and let us add her example to the motives to piety which this ſolemnity was, ſecondly, inſtituted to enforce.

It would not indeed be reaſonable to expect, did we not know the inattention and perverſeneſs of mankind, that any one who had followed a funeral, could fail to return home without new reſolutions of a holy life: for, who can ſee the final period of all human ſchemes and undertakings, without conviction of the vanity of all that terminates in the preſent ſtate? For, who can ſee the wiſe, the brave, the powerful, or the beauteous, carried to the grave, without reflection on the emptineſs of all thoſe diſtinctions, which ſet us here in oppoſition to each other? And who, when he ſees the vanity of all terreſtrial advantages, can forbear to wiſh for a more permanent and certain

certain happineſs? Such wiſhes, perhaps, often ariſe, and ſuch reſolutions are often formed.; but, before the reſolution can be exerted, before the wiſh can regulate the conduct, new proſpects open before us, new impreſſions are received; the temptations of the world ſolicit, the paſſions of the heart are put into commotion; we plunge again into the tumult, engage again in the conteſt, and forget, that what we gain cannot be kept, and that the life, for which we are thus buſy to provide, muſt be quickly at an end.

But, let us not be thus ſhamefully deluded! Let us not thus idly periſh in our folly, by neglecting the loudeſt call of Providence; nor, when we have followed our friends, and our enemies, to the tomb, ſuffer ourſelves to be ſurpriſed by the dreadful ſummons, and die, at laſt, amazed, and unprepared! Let every one whoſe eye glances on this bier, examine what would have been his condition, if the ſame hour had called him to judgement, and remember, that, though he is now ſpared, he may, perhaps, be to-morrow among ſeparate ſpirits.

ſpirits. The preſent moment is in our power: let us, therefore, from the preſent moment, begin our repentance! Let us not, any longer, harden our hearts, but hear, this day, the voice of our Saviour and our God, and begin to do, with all our powers, whatever we ſhall wiſh to have done, when the grave ſhall open before us! Let thoſe, who came hither weeping and lamenting, reflect, that they have not time for uſeleſs ſorrow; that their own ſalvation is to be ſecured, and that the day is far ſpent, and the night cometh, when no man can work; that tears are of no value to the dead, and that their own danger may juſtly claim their whole attention! Let thoſe who entered this place unaffected and indifferent, and whoſe only purpoſe was to behold this funeral ſpectacle, conſider, that ſhe, whom they thus behold with negligence, and paſs by, was lately partaker of the ſame nature with themſelves; and that they likewiſe are haſtening to their end, and muſt ſoon, by others equally negligent, be buried and forgotten! Let all remember, that the day of life is ſhort, and that the day of grace may be much ſhorter; that this may

be the laſt warning which God will grant us, and that, perhaps, he, who looks on this grave unalarmed, may ſink unreformed into his own!

Let it, therefore, be our care, when we retire from this ſolemnity, that we immediately turn from our wickedneſs, and do that which is lawful and right; that, whenever diſeaſe, or violence, ſhall diſſolve our bodies, our ſouls may be ſaved alive, and received into everlaſting habitations; where, with Angels and Archangels, and all the glorious Hoſt of Heaven, they ſhall ſing glory to God on high, and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

THE END.

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